

PRABUDDHA BHARATA

or AWAKENED INDIA

A monthly journal of the Ramakrishna Order
started by Swami Vivekananda in 1896



August 2019

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²THE ROAD TO WISDOM

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA ON

Science of Personal Magnetism

Coming to great leaders of mankind, we always find that it was the personality of the man that counted. Take all the great authors of the past, the great thinkers. Really speaking, how many thoughts have they thought? Take all the writings that have been left to us by the past leaders of mankind; take each one of their books and appraise them. The real thoughts, new and genuine, that have been thought in this world up to this time, amount to only a handful. Read in their books the thoughts they have left to us. The authors do not appear to be giants to us, and yet we know that they were great giants in their days. What made them so? Not simply the thoughts they thought, neither the books they wrote, nor the speeches they made, it was something else that is now gone, that is their personality. As I have already remarked, the personality of the man is two-thirds, and his intellect, his words, are but one-third. It is the real man, the personality of the man, that runs through us. Our actions are but effects. Actions must come when the man is there; the effect is bound to follow the cause. The ideal of all education, all training, should be this man-making. But, instead of that, we are always trying to polish up the outside. What use in polishing up the outside when there is no inside? The end and aim of all training is to make the man grow. The man who influences his fellow-beings, is a dynamo of power, and when that man is ready, he can do anything and everything he likes. How can we explain it by chemi-



cal and physical knowledge? How much of oxygen, hydrogen, carbon, etc. can explain this mysterious personality? And we still see, it is a fact. Compare the great teachers of religion with the great philosophers. The philosophers scarcely influenced anybody's inner man, and yet they wrote most marvellous books. The religious teachers, on the other hand, moved countries in their lifetime. The difference was made by personality. In the philosopher it is a faint personality that influences; in the great prophets it is tremendous. In the former we touch the intellect, in the latter we touch life. In the one case, it is simply a chemical process, putting certain chemical ingredients together which may gradually combine and under proper circumstances bring out a flash of light or may fail. In the other, it is like a torch that goes round quickly, lighting others. The science of Yoga claims that it has discovered the laws which develop this personality, and by proper attention to those laws and methods, each one can grow and strengthen his personality.

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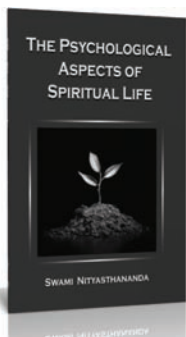


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Arise! Awake! And stop not till the goal is reached!

Maitrayaniya Upanishad

August 2019
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मैत्रायणीयोपनिषत्

अथान्यत्राप्युक्तं ब्रह्मणो वावैतत्तेजः परस्यामृतस्याशरीरस्य यच्छरीरस्यौष्ण्यमस्यैतत् घृतमथाविःसन्नभसि निहितं वैतदेकाग्रेणैवमन्तर्हृदयाकाशं विनुदन्ति यत्तस्य ज्योतिरिव सम्पद्यतीत्यतस्तद्भावमचिरेणैति भूमावयस्त्रिण्डं निहितं यथाऽचिरेणैति भूमित्वं मृद्वत्संस्थमयस्त्रिण्डं यथाग्न्यस्कारादयो नाभिभवन्ति प्रणश्यति चित्तं तथाश्रयेण सहैवमित्येवं ह्याह ।

हृदयाकाशमयं कोशमानन्दं परमालयं । स्वं योगश्च ततोऽस्माकं तेजश्चैवाग्निसूर्ययोः ॥

॥ ६.२७ ॥

Athany-atrapy-uktam brahmano va vaitat-tejah parasya-amritasya-asharirasya yachchharirasyaushnyam-asyaitat ghritam-atha-avib-san-nabhasi nihitam vaitad-ekagrenaivam-antar-bhridaya-akasham vinudanti yat-tasya jyotir-iva sampadyati-iti-atas-tad-bhavam-achirenaiti bhumav-ayas-pindam nihitam yatha'chirenaiti bhumitvam mridvat-samstham-ayaspindam yatha-agny-ayaskaradayo na-abhibhavanti pranashyati chittam tatha-ashrayena sahaivam-ity-evam hy-aha.

Hridyakashamayam kosham-anandam paramalayam.

Svam yogashcha tato'smakam tejashchaiva-agni-suryayoh.

(6.27)

And thus it has been said elsewhere: 'Indeed, this is the heart of Brahman, the supreme, the immortal, the bodiless, even the warmth of the body. For that heat this body is the ghee. Although it is manifest, indeed, it is hidden in the space of the heart. Then by intense concentration they disperse the space within the heart that the light, as it were, of that heat appears. Then one passes speedily into the same condition of light even as a ball of iron that is hidden in the earth passes speedily in the condition of earthiness. As fire, blacksmiths, and the like do not trouble about the ball or iron that is the condition of the earth, so does thought disappear together with its support.' And thus it has been said: 'The storehouse which consists of the space in the heart, the blissful, the supreme abode, is our self, our goal too and this the heat of fire and sun.'

(6.27)

THIS MONTH

WHAT IS the true goal of human beings? Is it a life of happiness? What is happiness? Is it a state of contentment? All these questions are answered and discussed in **Transcending Happiness**.

Nilanjan Bhowmick, assistant professor of philosophy at Delhi University, writes on **Norms of Foundations**. In this paper, Bhowmick discusses what philosophers talk about when they talk about foundations. It is obvious enough that philosophy has gone through changes regarding what they took as foundations. In the twentieth century, philosophy of language held a preeminent place, just as metaphysics did before Cartesian doubt took centre stage. In this paper, Bhowmick has tried to bring out the norms that govern philosophers' thinking about foundations. He has also tried to argue that the tension between different branches of philosophy claiming a foundational status depends on differing conceptions of what a naturalism must embrace. He concludes by suggesting, to get clear about what foundational work means, that we need to think how to change one of the significant meta-norms of foundational thinking: that foundations do not change anything above.

Rev. E Neil Gaiser, OSL, Pastor at the United Methodist Church, Kirkersville, Ohio, USA and the Ecumenical and Interreligious representative of the Council of Bishops talks about **E Stanley Jones at the Round Table—An Early Encounter of Christianity and Hinduism through Dialogue**. This is an edited version of the paper presented by the author at the

National Hindu-Christian Dialogue held at the Vedanta Society of Southern California, Hollywood, USA, during 23–24 January 2019.

Swami Purnananda, Ramakrishna Vedanta Centre, Dublin, Ireland talks about the success and future of the **Dublin City Interfaith Forum—A Necessary Journey**.

Alberto Martin, member of the Centre for South Asian Studies, University of Toronto explains **Becoming—Being, Unmanifest—Manifested**.

The young have wonderful insights on various issues. In *Young Eyes*, such insights are brought to the readers every month. This month, Dipanti Ghatak, a school student of class nine from Garden High School, Kasba, Kolkata shares her thoughts on **Educating the Underprivileged**.

Many wonderful nuggets of wisdom contained in ancient scriptures are difficult to understand. In *Balabodha*, such ancient wisdom is made easy. This month's topic is **Acharya**. Understanding this popular word is necessary to understand its meaning.

Steadfastness and perseverance are important to achieve growth in spiritual life. This is shown in the second instalment of the story **The Faith that Brought a Miracle**. This story is this month's *Traditional Tales* and has been translated from the Tamil book *Anmika Kathaigal*.

Fiona Woollard, a lecturer in philosophy at the University of Southampton, has published on topics including climate change and the non-identity problem, the moral significance of numbers, and the norm of monogamy, has written the book **Doing and Allowing Harm**. From this book, we bring you this month's *Manana*.

Transcending Happiness

YES, YOU READ IT right. We need to overcome happiness. Though we are bombarded since our childhood with the idea that to be happy is the goal of human life, the human condition does not show signs of being at peace with happiness. We would now attempt to briefly discuss this apparent paradox.

Since the period of cave dwellers, history has shown us that human beings have gone out of their way to seek disturbance. The cave dweller, for instance, could have merrily whiled away one's time by just sustaining the body with the bountiful that the trees offered in the forest. No, that was simply not enough for the human being.

The growth of ideas in human civilisation can be traced to the human pursuit of suffering. Ironically, almost all of the sources of global agony that we face today like climate change are the creations of the human intellect. So, while many motivational speakers and pop psychologists take pride in offering the soothing pill of 'authentic happiness' to one and all as the one-stop solution to all human failings, there is nothing authentic in happiness.

Recent attempts of the governments of some countries to offer salaries to their citizens without their doing any work were met with great protest and rejection. Yet, every worker around the world does come to a point at the workplace, when she or he frantically fumes about the work overload! This shows a rather quixotic behavioural trend of the human beings. This is best summed up as the pursuit of something that

constantly eludes us, much like the food dangling in front of the beast of burden so that the poor animal continues to carry its load with the never-ending hope that it will reach the delicacy.

Thus, the goal of human life appears to be more to pursue happiness than to actually attain it. The human condition truly gets it meaning

A static state of happiness is in reality a miserable state for any human being.

only when the human being understands that happiness is something one can attain and work hard for. However, the moment a person attains a state of happiness where all pursuits of happiness come to an end, the very meaning of human life is lost.

This is the reason spiritual giants have emphasised that the knowledge of the ultimate Truth does not lead to ultimate happiness, but such a knowledge leads to everlasting bliss. The distinction between happiness and bliss is that happiness always presupposes the presence or absence of misery or suffering. On the other hand, bliss is a state that is not dependent on any other state of the mind, because such bliss is attained only after transcending the mind.

Here, it would be pertinent, particularly for the non-Indian mind, to clarify the meaning of bliss in the present context. Though the words 'happiness' and 'bliss' are used interchangeably around the world, particularly in the English language, the Sanskrit equivalents of *sukha* and *ananda* mean diametrically opposite conditions.

Sukha is dependent on the other, while *ananda* is a state free of all instances of the other.

If happiness is to be only pursued and not really attained, what is the function of such a meaningless, Sisyphean endeavour? The answer to this question is found in the teachings of the numerous saints that this world has seen. Be it Sri Krishna, be it Lord Buddha, or be it Kabir-das, all have stressed the importance of suffering in turning the human mind towards the journey of finding one's true nature.

It was when the holocaust brought a futureless bleak before millions, who had suddenly nothing to do, nowhere to go, nothing to aspire for, and in general no utility for life, that they looked at the human condition from a completely different perspective. The World War II created innovations in weapons and warfare; it also brought paradigmatic shifts in human understanding of life.

The goal of human life then is definitely not attaining happiness. Such a static state of happiness is in reality a miserable state for any human being. Imagine a person, who is provided everything she or he wants and has to do nothing at all to get anything. Such a person will not only have no idea of the value of the big and small things that life and Nature offers, there will be nothing for this person to do and she or he will soon turn into a vegetable.

This is why many dictator regimes charted out the exact way of life and provided for their citizens so that there was not any dearth of necessities. In effect, such regimes aimed to create an utopian society and failed every time. This was the case even with some political approaches.

The human being can only imagine utopia but can never attain it because any semblance to utopia can only be dystopic for the human condition. It is the stunting of the creative human intelligence to even think of a state where nothing


more would have to be done. That would be the end of the human being.

If we even have a quick glance at the different cultures of the world, we would soon understand that the best in cinema, literature, poetry, philosophy, performing arts, painting, and all other endeavours that have brought the human being to the present position in the scheme of Nature, were produced in cultures that constantly struggled with strife and penury. The content mind never produces anything profound. It is only the state of spiritual fulfilment that is attained by transcending the mind that can provide words of wisdom for the entire world.

Much like the mother of pearl which starts the development of pearl only when an irritation is introduced in the form of a catalyst, it is only disturbance and discontent that brings growth and creation.

The spiritual message of the seers of the past and present is not to attain a utopic, content, static, vegetable-like state of no endeavour, but to use the constant state of discontent and disgust of the human mind as a ladder to attain heights of spiritual realisation that are much beyond the ambit of the human being, or any living being, beyond the universe.

However, as long as we deal with the ignorant state of perceiving this universe, we have to acknowledge and appreciate the significant role of suffering. Starting from scientific inventions and discoveries to new forms of fiction to engrossing screenplays to new varieties of dishes at your dinner table, everything that we do and encounter is the result of some dissatisfaction.

As the mental state of the disciple in the first chapter of the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, it is only an acute abhorrence of the present condition that would lead us towards our true state. Now, do you really want to be happy? 

Norms of Foundations

Nilanjan Bhowmick

THIS PAPER is about what philosophers talk about when they talk about foundations. It is obvious enough that philosophy has gone through changes regarding what they took as foundations. In the twentieth century, philosophy of language held a preeminent place, just as metaphysics did before Cartesian doubt took centre stage. In this paper, I have tried to bring out the norms that govern philosophers' thinking about foundations. I have also tried to argue that the tension between different branches of philosophy claiming a foundational status depends on differing conceptions of what a naturalism must embrace. I have concluded by suggesting, to get clear about what foundational work means, that we need to think how to change one of the significant meta-norms of foundational thinking: that foundations do not change anything above. A strong reading makes philosophy into a practice, and a weak reading makes every branch of philosophy claim foundational status. We need to find a middle way.

1. Introduction: Many Claimants

We have come to think of philosophy in a certain way. Philosophy is an inquiry devoted to foundations. The way philosophers thought of these foundations has changed over time. When philosophy came into being, when it first started, there was a great interest in metaphysics. Metaphysics was *first* philosophy. It was what was preeminent in inquiry. It is where you start and it is where you rest when you are done with inquiry.

Once you know what is there and how it is all connected to each other—which are the chief tasks of metaphysics to answer—then your inquiry has not just been successful but *foundationally* successful.

Then, after Descartes (1596–1650), we realised that metaphysics cannot be the dominant interest in philosophy. It is not what drives everything else. There is something prior to metaphysics, namely epistemology. We cannot start with the question 'what is there' but we have to first ask 'how do I know what is there?'

Later, much later, we realised, or we *thought* we realised, that epistemology is not the starting point; it is not what everything turns on; what everything turns on is language and logic. Philosophy of language is the foundation of the subject of philosophy. What you need to understand is how language works. This is what philosophy is. This is its essence. The primary question of philosophy is 'what is meaning?' and not 'what is there', or 'how do I know'. All questions of philosophy could be answered if we got clear about what *meaning* was.

Of course, even this view, the view that the study of the way language works is foundational, has been supplanted. Some think that we need to know how the mind works, where the mind is associated with consciousness. *That* is fundamental.

Ranged against all these views lies the powerful view that what really matters, what comes before anything else, is ethics, or, how one should live. What is the best life and is it possible to live

it? Socrates, we all remember, said that the unexamined life is not worth living.

And who is to rule out the concerns of aesthetics as not being at the base of the subject? Surely, it is arrogant to rule that out. There are other candidates. What is there to rule out philosophy of religion? What is more important than God's existence, after all? That is about as foundational as one gets. God, surely, is the fountainhead of what is there. Also, are we to forget political philosophy as a claimant of the source and the final resting place of philosophy? It is somewhat narrow-minded and rather forgetful to do so. Plato's *Republic* is still considered one of the best introductions not only to Plato but to the subject.

2. No Foundations?

As we begin to roll into the third decade of the twenty-first century, it might be closer to the truth to say that there is no consensus on just what the foundations of the subject are. Indeed, there may be no foundations at all. There are these various activities that philosophers do and that is all there is to philosophy. Philosophers who work on metaphysics or epistemology do not work with the feeling that they are doing the most important work and the rest are just waiting for their results to stream out so that they could also do something worthwhile. Of course, even if they do work with the feeling or the confidence that their work is foundational it is not clear what reasons exist for such confidence and it is certainly not obvious that the philosophers are right in so thinking.

Furthermore, there is enough to do in medical ethics, for instance, than worrying one's head about whether it is foundational or whether anyone else is doing something really important in say, epistemology, whose results are useful to medical ethics. Greater specialisation has had

its effects. Surely, there is enough to think about in modal logic than worrying about whether it is foundational or whether some other subject is going to throw any greater light on it. That it might well turn out to be, but whether *that* subject is more foundational or not is an open question. Moreover, even if some aspect of philosophy turned out to be more foundational, its bearings on other aspects of philosophy remain unclear. If ethics were foundational, how is it of any use to the broader concerns of modal logic or how is it helpful in understanding what is the nature of logical constants? And knowing which words count as the logical constants tells us precious little about how to lead my life in the most virtuous way.

What I have said above does not describe Indian or African philosophy or Chinese or Latin American philosophy. But the situation here may not be any different. Just for an example, take Indian philosophy. It is well known that a dominant trend in Indian philosophy is that whatever one does, one aims at liberation. Even if you are learning logic or you are engaged in understanding perception, your goal is ultimately to liberate yourself from the entanglements of the world. Whatever one may think of this notion of liberation—we may react with some bemusement—that is what was considered the goal or the final resting place of philosophical endeavour.

The historical schools of Indian philosophy do have a clear goal that can be taken to be the 'foundation' of the subject. Liberation is the reason of all inquiry. None of the different branches of philosophy—metaphysics, logic, epistemology—count as central. They are themselves to be pursued for a different end. If the notion of liberation is thrown in doubt, then the entire endeavour of inquiry would be in danger here. And, of course, it can be doubted. And if such

doubt arises, then either the endeavour of Indian philosophy would be in danger of turning into historical exegesis, or else we would have to restart the whole inquiry again and then we are back to where one started, for every branch of philosophy has foundational aspirations.

We have been reflecting above, rather briefly, about what have been considered foundational in philosophy. We have not gone into the reasons as to *why* they were considered foundational yet. One must, of course, remember that philosophy *itself* is considered a foundational subject. It is what lays the bedrock for the *other* subjects to stand on. That too is contestable and has been contested by philosophers themselves. Lots of philosophers think that science is first philosophy. Indeed, you can do whatever you want to do in ethics or logic, but that is not *first* philosophy. It is not the bedrock.

A preeminent place now goes to physics. Everything is made up of atoms or whatever they are made of. End of story. Philosophers have to admit this and then explain how else other puzzling aspects of the world like consciousness or perception could be made possible on physicalist assumptions. The foundations are already there from the beginning; philosophers come in later to mop up the troublesome parts of the story of the universe. Partly, physics is first philosophy because of the success of physics and its methods and partly because philosophers, even with the best of reasons and intentions, cannot settle on any one answer to whatever question excites them. As is often said, there is no progress in philosophy, with way too much disagreement in the subject.

3. Foundations: What Are We Talking About?

Philosophers are wedded to the notion of sources, beginnings, foundations, starting

points, the ground zero of whatever there is and whatever we do and whatever we think about. Philosophers like to think of themselves as occupying the intellectual ground zero, even if they are *against* the notion of a ground zero. Even being against ground zero is being at ground zero for them. The roots of what philosophers think about seem to philosophers to run deep. They not only run deep; they run deeper than other subjects do. This may well be a misconception, but we cannot know that unless we have looked over the concept of a foundation well enough.

This is what I want to do. In a nutshell, I want to know what good reasons exist to believe that X—where X could be any subset of inquiry in philosophy—is foundational. Now, this seems like an impossible, Sisyphean task, since it might involve us in a deep study of just about every subject of philosophy. No one person can achieve that, however early one may start. So that I am not involved in an encyclopaedic exercise, what I propose to do is to study the *notion* of a foundation. I am looking for the *norms* that guide us to think that something is foundational.¹

The following questions will clarify what I am looking for. When we think of foundations what do we think of? When we think of something as the starting point what do we have in mind? What motivated us to think that metaphysics was the foundation of everything? Was this motivation correct? What made us change our mind after Descartes? And was the change of mind from metaphysics to epistemology really correct? How did we know it was correct? What norms guided us in thinking that philosophy of language was central to the subject? And today, if we do not have any central subject to rely on, what norm has guided us to think like this? And tomorrow, if we came to think of some aspect of philosophy as foundational again then what

reasons would motivate us to do so? What makes us think that literary theory is not foundational?

There are two senses of foundations that have been hinted at above. The first sense is that philosophy is the foundation of all inquiry. The second sense is that there are all these *subjects* within philosophy and one of them is foundational *to* philosophy. Whichever one of them is foundational to philosophy will turn out to be foundational for the rest of inquiry. Of course, it might not turn out to be so. But we hope that it does.

The first sense is somewhat bare and leaves room to think that whatever one does in philosophy is foundational to any inquiry that is not primarily philosophical. That is more like a 'common sense' view of philosophy, something we think when we don't know much about it. It certainly can turn out that all that we do in philosophy turns out to be foundational to anything else. That would be a pleasing result, but let us wait before we make such an announcement. If this was the sense of foundations we had, then we would not have changed our minds regarding what was more foundational to inquiry, metaphysics, epistemology, philosophy of language or politics. After all, they are *all* foundational; but the way the history of the subject has progressed suggests that we do have a more restrictive notion of foundations in mind. The second sense is a more demanding notion of a foundation. Not everything philosophers do lies at the core of philosophy. But one of them has greater anchoring power.

Denying these two senses leads to different denials of what it might mean to have a foundation. Denying the first sense would mean that none of the things we do in philosophy are foundational to any of the other things we do. This does leave open the question whether there is some aspect of philosophy that is central to philosophy *itself*.

The denial of the second sense amounts to saying that there is no one aspect of philosophy that will turn out to be first philosophy. *That* can mean the affirmation of the first sense of the notion of foundations—everything is foundational—or else it can also mean that there is nothing that can count as foundational at least *in* philosophy. It is quite possible that the various aspects of philosophy are simply different subjects like geography or literature with very little to connect them with each other.

It is important to note at the outset that it is quite possible to think of something as foundational even if that subject in itself suffers from varying opinions. Different epistemologists may have different opinions as to what epistemology is. Some may think that knowledge is basic and some may think that providing a definition of knowledge is essential to epistemology. Some epistemologists may think that knowledge has no value over and above true belief and some may not think so. Some may think that epistemology should be belief-based, as the traditional view goes, and some may think that it should be agent-based, as virtue epistemologists do. One epistemologist may think that having foundations to knowledge is essential and another epistemologist might think that coherence is good enough and that the search for foundations is illusory. These differences of opinion amongst epistemologists are not supposed to show us that there is a *problem* with the idea that epistemology is the foundation of all inquiry or that it is the foundation of all philosophy.

This might be thought a bit high-handed. Surely, the one reason why a lot of thinkers maintain that philosophy has no right to call itself foundational is because there is no consensus on any issue in it. So, there appears to be a principle regarding the notion of foundations: *only that*

X can be foundational which has no conflicting opinions within X.

While this may be a reasonable principle, and may seem intuitively forceful, stating it baldly does not amount to an argument as to why we are to take it as the core norm of something being foundational. The principle may not be wrong, but we do not know whether it is wrong or right unless we have studied the notion of a foundation carefully. If, after a careful study, the principle proves false, then so be it. And if it is true, we have to see what the consequences of that are.

Another aspect that needs to be made clear is that whatever is treated as foundational in philosophy, it is the *whole* of it that is treated as foundational and not just some part of it. This is not so in the sciences where some part of it—say, the theory of the fundamental particles—is treated as foundational and the rest of the structure of reality is built around it. In philosophy, more often than not, if metaphysics is the foundation, then the whole of metaphysical theory is treated as foundational. This may suggest some vagueness in the meaning of the word ‘foundation’.

4. What Method Are We to Pursue?

In investigating why we think something is foundational, one can simply turn to the history of the subject. Surely, the norms of foundations would be clearest in the practice of philosophers, how they did philosophy, how they conceived of it. Even if it turns out that looking at the history of the subject will blind us to the true nature of why a foundation is to be treated as a foundation, we will at least come to know *that* we are being blinded by looking at the history of the subject. In case we are being blinded to the true meaning of ‘foundations’ then we can turn to nonhistorical measures, if required.

Let us turn, for a start, to the history of the subject regarding the norms of foundations.

5. Foundations and History

Why is there something rather than nothing? In all the phenomena that presents itself to us, which of these are really there and which are mere appearance? What entities are basic, if any, or is it the case that all entities are derivative? Is the cosmos the only entity that is there? These questions are rolled into one question when we ask the question of metaphysics: what is there.

Aristotle, in Book Zeta of the *Metaphysics*, sums up the question of metaphysics memorably, when he writes, ‘Indeed, the question that was, is, and always will be asked, and always will cause difficulty—that is, the question “What is being?”—is the question “What is substance?”’²

Aristotle had a rough norm to wonder about what substance is: whatever is there, it must be a *this* and it must be *separable*. What he meant by these two terms is a matter of intense debate and is caught up with his unhappiness with Plato’s forms existing on their own apart from the particulars. For Aristotle, anything that exists must be a particular of a certain nature.

Whatever may be the case with Aristotle, we need to ask what made philosophers think that metaphysics was foundational. Some reasons are offered by Aristotle. He discusses, in Book Alpha of the *Metaphysics*, what is generally said of those who are considered wise. He says that a wise man (a) knows all things, though he does not know the details of each thing, (b) knows things that are not easy to know, (c) can teach the causes and principles of things whatever may be the branch of knowledge, (d) knows those things that are known for their own sake, and not for the sake of leading to success in some practical matter and (e) commands and does not obey those who are less wise than him.

In the paragraph that follows, the one where Aristotle describes the wise man, he goes on to say that the characteristic of knowing all things belongs to a person who knows what is most universal and what is most universal can be said to be the first principles of things and that these first principles are causes. Therefore, the most universal knowledge is that of causes. Rounding off what he says, he says that 'the science which knows to what end each thing must be done is the most authoritative of the sciences; and this end is the good of that thing.'³ It follows from all this that metaphysics 'must be a science that investigates the first principles and causes' (ibid.).

Some of the characteristics of the wise man may strike us as rather unusual. We can leave aside the issue of whether he should command or obey or whether he should be able to teach the first principles effectively or whether the highest wisdom is knowledge known for its own sake or whether ultimate knowledge is knowledge of what is good for something.

What is interesting to note about Aristotle is that he thinks that metaphysics is the most general of all sciences and that it is an *explanatory* endeavour. The answer to the question 'What is substance?' or 'What is being?' is not just a list of things. It is a list that has exploratory potential and explanatory reach. Not only must we answer the question what is there, we must also know why what is there is there, in the sense of having an account of the matter, not in the sense of the genesis, but in the sense of the being of the thing. An example of such an account would be to say, as Aristotle does, that a substance is something of which every other property is predicated. It is itself not predicated of anything.

Once we know the 'principles and causes' we know what is there and we know why we thought what is there *is* there. Once we know what is there, we can investigate their nature

further. If we are certain that the statement 'Aristotle is a man' reports a genuine fact of nature and that his being a man makes him a substance, then we can get into the science of what it is to be a man. This, in a sense, makes metaphysics foundational, for without any consensus on what there is, what would be the substance of any investigation carried out by science?

Metaphysics lays bare the nature of the existence of objects that other inquiries investigate. Some of them exist fundamentally and some exist in a derivative sense. It is in this sense that metaphysics has a reach that other sciences with explanatory ambitions can latch on to and other aspects of philosophy can use as well. If metaphysics decides that something *isn't* there—that there are no persons or mountains—that would not mean that these things cannot be investigated; it would just mean that such investigations won't carry any great value in the sense of having explanatory power, though it might have a lot of practical significance. Aspects of the world can have practical significance without having any being of their own. A good example can be taken from Aristotle. Being healthy is of great practical significance though it does not carry the honorific badge of being an independent substance. It has no independent *being* for Aristotle. Health does not stand around and walk about on its own. What has independent existence is being a person, or so Aristotle maintains in *Metaphysics*, Zeta 1.

Metaphysics also finds entities like God or other possible worlds to be plausibly there, which science has no methods to investigate. Also, our common comprehension powers, dependent on the senses and instruments that extend our sensory reach, or the inferences we make from sensory information, are inadequate to come to terms with possible worlds or a God. Hence, only some aspects of metaphysics are relevant for further investigation.

What norm of foundations have we uncovered from the historical importance of metaphysics? Something like the following picture emerges. Inquiry is about particular things and general things. We inquire about why rain fell today and also why rain falls at all and what rain is in any case. Is rain a phenomenon standing on its own legs or is rain an aspect of some other phenomenon? Now, only those inquiries can claim to be foundational that inquire into generalities. Of these inquiries, metaphysics is the *most* general, for it lays bare the answer to the question, what it is that makes us think that something is there at all. Of course, other inquiries can continue without any illuminating answers from metaphysics. That is not supposed to be immediately detrimental to metaphysics. Other inquiries like physics or chemistry answer to different varieties of generality, and metaphysics answers to the most general question of all.⁴

Metaphysics is a different kind of inquiry. It is an answer to the most general question of all: what is it that can be taken to exist? Inquiry has to be about what exists. So, the most general inquiry must ask the question that we just asked: what is it that can be taken to exist? I am far from maintaining that this question has any clear meaning and even if it does have that, we have come to understand its correct meaning. I am simply saying that this is the way we have understood the nature of metaphysics as being foundational to philosophy, or foundational to all inquiry.

The norm that emerges from such a conception of a foundation is the following:

Norm One: A foundation to all inquiry is laid when we inquire into the nature of what it is to *be*.

Aristotle was well aware that there are various answers to the question ‘what is being’ and that ‘what it is to be’ has many senses. But he thought



Statue of Aristotle in the Aristotle Park of Stagira, Greece

that he could get at the right answers or could channelise the efforts of metaphysicians towards the right answers. He was not deterred by the bewildering number of opinions on the subject.

There is a certain *meta-norm* that is operational in the selection of Norm One. The meta-norm is: whatever is the most general question is also the most foundational. It is natural to ask which questions are the most general and do all general questions make sense and even if they make sense do they have answers. These questions have plagued the history of philosophy. One just has an intuitive feel that Norm One is about the most general aspect of inquiry and hence it is foundational. But an intuitive feel is no answer to the question whether it is *genuinely* foundational or whether it is genuinely the most general of questions. We need a criterion of generality; else, we do not know what our intuition is tracking.

One thing that can be said in favour of metaphysics is that it is at least an inquiry into the nature of the world through the most seemingly general question one can ask of it. Since all inquiry in one way or another is about the world, metaphysics in asking the most general question comes out with the most general answer and the more general the answer the closer we are to foundations in some sense. There is another meta-norm lurking in the background here, a significant meta-norm. This norm is that whatever earns the right of being foundational, it has to be sensitive to the general notion of *inquiry* into the world. The foundations of philosophy are tied to inquiry into what there is. It is quite natural to think that the most foundational of questions regarding inquiry into the nature of the world must be to ask what it means to exist. It appears to be the most general question that relates to the second norm. Inquiry would stall if it had no object to investigate.

But it is the latter meta-norm that may have led philosophers after Descartes to think that epistemology was foundational to philosophy. Let us see how. Assuming one accepts what Aristotle says in the *Metaphysics*, we seemed to be confident about what was there in the world. We seemed to have some confidence regarding what it meant for anything to be there in the world. At least we knew what we were talking about even if we disagreed with Aristotle or Plato.

But all this inquiry requires confidence in our *methods* of inquiry. We need to be sure about our reasoning powers, and sure about the deliverance of the senses. Our senses give us some information that we process and we come to the conclusion that there is a person in front of us. We can then go on to ask ourselves various questions about the being of this person. However, if we didn't know how we knew anything, and if our sources of knowledge were infected with uncertainty and irremediable doubt, then all inquiry into what is there is in serious trouble. Removing that trouble and arriving at certainty was the chief task of philosophy, so post-Cartesian philosophy has held.

It is surprising, when we look back, that answering the sceptic, answering someone who doubts the validity of the ways we inquire, is the primary task of philosophy. This was clearly an unusual move. Even if one thinks that epistemology is a serious concern it does not immediately suggest that it is the most foundational of all that we do in philosophy or elsewhere. It is true that once one is exposed to the worry that the sceptic sets, it is hard to get away from it. Once we know that we could be dreaming, or that we could be a brain in a vat, our whole inquiry into what gives being to this world collapses, for without knowing *that* there is a world there is no point in addressing what there is in the world. Either my senses tell me what exists, or my reason informs

me about what exists. If both the senses and our powers of reasoning are in grave doubt regarding their deliverances, then, surely, our first task is to address this doubt. This is what it is like to lay a foundation to inquiry. So Norm One has to change. The new norm should read something like the following.

Norm Two: A foundation is laid to all inquiry when we have established that our methods of inquiry deliver what they purport to deliver.

Norm Two is clearly quite different from Norm One. Epistemology will not deliver a different world to us at the end of its endeavour. Exactly the same world is going to emerge. It is the same world about which one has to further inquire. It is somewhat misleading to think that Norm Two and Norm One are entirely independent of each other. If it is the case that our powers of reasoning are involved in telling us what there is, then, if, epistemology has to shore up the powers of reasoning, apart from buttressing the senses, then epistemology, by delivering confidence to what our methods of reasoning tell us about what there is, will also give us those objects that reason says there is. An example will help here. Our reasoning may tell us that God exists. Our senses are silent on the issue. Suppose epistemology tells us, after fierce debates, that there is some chance that this reasoning is correct. Then we have even greater confidence that God exists, for epistemology has now shown that whatever method of reasoning was used was valid. A layer of justification has been added. Another example, perhaps a more convincing one, would be that of the existence of possible worlds. One would imagine that making sense of modal talk requires the existence of possible worlds. If our epistemology now tells us that whatever methods of inquiry we used to establish this was correct and that it is immune to sceptical attack, then we have greater confidence that possible worlds exist.

Of course, checking on whether reasoning is reliable or not is generally the province of logic and not that of epistemology. But if a sceptical doubt is raised regarding the reasoning used to establish the existence of God or other possible worlds, and the sceptical doubt is a good one, and it needs clearing, and if it is the task of epistemology to clear sceptical doubts about the methods of our inquiry, then it follows that logic and epistemology are intertwined in this matter. It is true that we do not have *sensory* access to God or other possible worlds. It is an epistemic decision we have to make whether our reasoning requires *further* support from the senses. Even if they do need such support, the reasoning which told us that such objects exist may itself be valid.

Suppose epistemologists restrict their attention to just the deliverance of the senses and wonder how to justify the beliefs we have of the world through saving the senses from sceptical attacks. Suppose, further, that they succeed in this enterprise. Knowledge gets defined, beliefs about the world prove to be safe and sound, justifications end up guaranteeing our beliefs. In such a case, the appearances that we start with regarding the world, the ones we came to doubt, are the ones that we end up with. Even if these appearances are not to be considered appearances but are given the status of reality, the answers to Norm One are still awaited. Metaphysicians well know that there is something presented to the senses; from that they don't immediately conclude anything about what there is. Once epistemology is done, metaphysics would still have to start off as an inquiry. It is this idea that makes epistemology more foundational. All other inquiry, including philosophical inquiry, can be pursued undisturbed before we did epistemology and after we finish doing epistemology. Post the epistemological inquiry, we are surer of what we thought we knew, but we know no *further* than we knew before.

A certain meta-norm is operative in this conception of epistemology. This meta-norm is: whatever is foundational, it leaves the truths of every other inquiry entirely unaffected. Of course, epistemology is uncomfortable with the existence of Platonic forms, Gods, or possible worlds; so this norm is not entirely descriptive of the *practice* of epistemology, but any inquiry where sensory access is desirable and required, the norm just stated carries a strong flavour of being true. This norm is quite a natural norm: giving a foundation to mathematics should not lead us to think that two and two add up to five. Giving a foundation to physics should not lead us to think that something is seriously wrong with the idea that light can bend near a massive object. Giving a foundation to literature should not lead us to think that *Anna Karenina* is a terrible piece of art.

Setting up foundations for different subjects that do not disturb the subject as such may be hard to do and in some cases quite impossible. Thinking what art is can upset what we had earlier thought to be a great work of art. Thinking what economics is can upset what we generally take economics to be.

The meta-norm states an ideal condition of setting up a foundation, but it is restrictive; it is un-ambitious; and it is non-interfering. Epistemology, conceived under such a meta-norm, fits perfectly into its fold. But metaphysics does not. Metaphysics has ambitions; it is interfering; and it dislikes restrictions on the scope of reason. It adds and subtracts entities from the world. It might even decide that nothing exists. It might decide, after due reasoning, that even fictional objects are denizens of this world. True, epistemology *can* lead one to ultimately believe in scepticism, and so give up on one's cherished beliefs in the world around us, but *this* result of epistemology does not agree with the norm as stated.

This does not show that there is anything terribly wrong with the sceptic. What it shows us is that there is a fundamental tension in the notion of philosophy as foundational. One notion is that foundations cannot disturb what lies above. This is obvious enough. If foundations are to be laid, they could not be called foundations if they disturbed and produced cracks in what lay above. The other notion is that foundations can lead to significant disturbance in what lies above or around. The latter notion is tied to a more traditional notion of inquiry. What we want is one account of the world. All our inquiry, philosophical or otherwise, is directed to foundations. Hence, if philosophy is foundational in nature, it will end up affecting other aspects of inquiry. It would be rather surprising if it would not.

(To be concluded)

Notes and References

1. When I speak of norms of foundations, I don't mean this in the sense that the recent *grounding* literature would give to such an expression. I want to explore what drives us to choose some particular inquiry as the foundational inquiry of the subject. In the grounding literature, a foundation, the fundamental level, is taken to be irreflexive, asymmetrical, and transitive. These are norms that govern a *metaphysical* foundation, but we are not told why this is the foundational inquiry of our subject. For overviews of the grounding literature, see M Clark and D Liggins, 'Recent work on Grounding', *Analysis*, 72/4 (October 2012), 812–23 and Michael J Raven, 'Ground', *Philosophy Compass*, 10/5 (April 2015), 322–33.
2. D Bostock, *Metaphysics Book Z and H* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 2.
3. W D Ross, *Metaphysics: Aristotle* (Digireads.com, 2006), 5; *The Works of Aristotle*, ed. W D Ross (Oxford: Oxford University, 1966), 982.
4. There may well be different varieties of generality that metaphysics all on its own may have to be sensitive to. I have not explored that question here.

E Stanley Jones at the Round Table —An Early Encounter of Christianity and Hinduism through Dialogue

Rev. E Neil Gaiser, OSL



E Stanley Jones (1884–1973)

Introduction

SPEAKING TO a largely Christian audience at the 1893 World's Parliament of Religions in Chicago, the great Swami Vivekananda offered a devastating, and yet, much needed critique of Christian missions, specifically to India. He said:

Christians must always be ready for good criticism, and I hardly think that you will mind if I make a little criticism. You Christians, who are so fond of sending out missionaries to save the soul of the heathen—why do you not try to save their bodies from starvation? In India, during the terrible famines, thousands died from hunger, yet you Christians did nothing. You

erect churches all through India, but the crying evil in the East is not religion—they have religion enough—but it is bread that the suffering millions of burning India cry out for with parched throats. They ask us for bread, but we give them stones. It is an insult to a starving people to offer them religion; it is an insult to a starving man to teach him metaphysics.¹

A hundred and twenty-six years later, his words hit home. For many, myself included, the words ‘missionary’ and ‘missions’ often have negative connotations. One might immediately think of the disastrous effects of colonialism and Western cultural imperialism on other countries, or, how Christian missions have frequently undermined the belief systems, traditions, and practices of people of other faiths. But today, as we turn our attention to historic encounters between Christianity and Hinduism, there was however, one twentieth-century Christian missionary from my own Methodist tradition who singlehandedly revolutionised the way many Christians approach missionary work and who was an early pioneer of interreligious dialogue between these two great faiths. In this paper and presentation, I will provide a brief biographical sketch of E Stanley Jones; I will describe his unique approach to Christian missions; I will discuss his close friendship with Mahatma Gandhi and his outspoken advocacy for Indian independence; then I will highlight his groundbreaking work in interreligious dialogue; and finally I will offer some critical reflection and implications for Christian-Hindu conversation here.

Biographical Sketch and on the Mission Field

Eli Stanley Jones was born on 3 January 1884 in Clarksville, Maryland, USA. He grew up in Baltimore and after having a deep conversion

experience at the age of seventeen, he later went to Asbury College in Wilmore, Kentucky. Following his graduation in 1906, one year later, at the age of twenty-three, he was sent to India as a missionary of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Initially, the work proved difficult for the inexperienced missionary and he experienced both blessings and hardships. For the next eight years he was the pastor of the English Church at Lucknow, superintendent of the Lucknow District, and principal of the Sitapur Boarding School. In 1910, he met another missionary by the name of Mabel Lossing, who was working as a schoolteacher and they were married in 1911. Their only daughter, Eunice, was born on 29 April 1914. But all his years of hard work began to take a toll on Jones, driving him to a mental and physical breakdown. When all seemed hopeless and he very nearly gave up on his work, he had a powerful encounter with God that sent him back to the mission field fully revitalised and armed with what would become a revolutionary approach to missions as a whole.

In addition to his work in India, Jones served as a preacher, lecturer, author, and diplomat. It is said that he wrote more than sixty thousand sermons and preached five to seven times a day. He was heard by thousands in places like Japan, Korea, Burma, China, the Philippines, and Malaysia. As lifelong and ardent pacifist, he became friends with the likes of General Douglas MacArthur and President Franklin Roosevelt and he worked as an Ambassador between the US and Japan before and after the Second World War, earning him the nickname ‘The Apostle of Peace’ in Japan.² He was also an important figure in peace and reconciliation work in other parts of Asia and Africa.

He achieved numerous accolades during his lifetime. In the December 1938 issue of *Time*

magazine, E Stanley Jones was called 'The World's Greatest Missionary' and the *Christian Century* said that he was 'the most trusted exponent of evangelism in the American Church' and that 'perhaps no Christian leader in America commands a wider popular following than he'.³ In 1962 he was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize. For his important role in establishing religious freedom in the post-colonial Indian government and for his work as a spokesman of the new government of India, he was awarded the Gandhi Peace Prize in 1963, while being heralded as 'the greatest interpreter of Indian affairs in our time', having 'done more than any other person to bring India and the United States together' (ibid.). He died on 25 January 1973 at the age of 88 in India.⁴

On the Mission Field

As we begin to reflect on the paradigm shift Jones brought to the mission field, I am immediately reminded of his own theological reflection on the whole enterprise. Much in keeping with Swamiji's statements before him, Jones writes:

A very severe criticism is beating upon this whole question of missions from many angles and sources. Personally I welcome it. ... We have been called international meddlers, creed mongers to the East, feverish ecclesiastics compassing land and sea to gain another proselyte. From the other side comes the criticism that we satisfy a racial superiority complex when we go on helpful service to other nations; that we are the kindly side of imperialism—we go ahead and touch the situation in terms of schools and hospitals and human helpfulness, then imperialism comes along and gathers up the situation in the name of empire; or that capitalism takes over and exploits the situation as intrepid missionaries open it up. Again it is said that it is a bit of spiritual impertinence to come to a nation that can produce a Gandhi or a Tagore. Finally we

are told that the whole missionary movement is a mistake, since as non-Christian investigators tell us, the last command of Jesus to go into the world and preach the gospel is an interpolation, hence the whole is founded on a mistaken idea.⁵

In other words, at a time when most missionaries and church leaders were supporting the British empire and opposing the Indian National Movement, Jones came to the conclusion that Christian missions could no longer simply be about 'winning conversions' and imposing a Western identity on converts. He produced these reflections in the form of a seminal book, entitled *The Christ of the Indian Road* that caused an international sensation when it was first published and has had a continued influence on missiology to the present day. In it, he forcefully argues that

Christianity must be defined as Christ, not the Old Testament, not Western civilization, not even the system built around him in the West, but Christ himself ... Christ must be in an Indian setting. It must be the Christ of the Indian Road. ... It must work with the national grain and not against it. Christ must not seem a Western Partisan of white rule, but a brother of men. ... We want the East to keep its own soul—only thus can it be creative. We are not there to plaster Western civilization upon the East, to make it a pale copy of ourselves. ... Jesus is universal. He can stand the shock of transplantation. He appeals to the universal heart. ... We will give them Christ, and urge them to interpret him through their own genius and life. Then the interpretation will be first-hand and vital (22–34).

What he is calling for here would later be termed 'contextualisation' and 'inculturation' by missiologists, which, by definition, the former occurs when the Gospel message is presented 'within the unique and changing contexts of cultures and worldviews'⁶ and the latter

takes place when the Gospel is adapted to a particular cultural setting and in turn reflects the influence of those cultures on the evolution of such teachings.⁷ These models recognise that all people are made in the image of God and consequently, they uplift the good that is found in other cultures, belief systems, traditions, and social structures and they allow for the emergence of new expressions and reinterpretations of Christ and the Gospel message. As one misanthropologist observes, Jones called for 'a rigorous reexamination of basic values of the Jesus of the Gospels. He insisted the new reality should be egalitarian, abhor racism and economic injustice, and take seriously the needs and desires of all people so that non-violent solutions could be found to deal with human conflict.'⁸ Central to this change in his theology was his friendship with Gandhi, who 'marched into the soul of

humanity in the most triumphal march that any man ever made since the death and resurrection of the Son of God'.⁹

Friendship with Mahatma Gandhi

E Stanley Jones first met Mahatma Gandhi in 1919 at St Stephen's College, Delhi just before his fame had begun to spread. He went into an upstairs room to find him sitting on a bed, surrounded by scores of papers. After a warm greeting by both men, Jones cut right to the theological heart of the matter when he asked Gandhi point blank: 'How can we make Christianity naturalised in India, not a foreign thing, identified with a foreign government and a foreign people, but a part of the national life of India and contributing its power to India's uplift? What would you, as one of the Hindu leaders of India, tell me, a Christian, to do in order to make this possible?' (69–70).

Gandhi's reply was something that Jones would put into practice for the rest of his life, and it is indeed something that all Christians should seek to uphold. Gandhi said: 'First, I would suggest that all of you Christians and missionaries must begin to live more like Jesus Christ. Second, practice your religion without adulterating it or toning it down. Third, emphasise love and make it your working force, for love is central in Christianity. Fourth, study the non-Christian religions more sympathetically to find the good that is within them, in order to have a more sympathetic approach to the people' (70). The two of them would meet on several occasions in the years following and they became very close friends.

Specific to the present discussion, there are a couple things I want to highlight about their relationship, especially in reflection on their first meeting. First, the influence that this conversation had on E Stanley Jones in the political



arena cannot be understated. Jones became an ardent supporter of the Indian independence movement with such force that he ended up being banished from India for a period of several years. He felt that Christians everywhere should adopt Satyagraha or the way of non-violence as a total way of life because it was precisely this form of civil disobedience that was the embodiment of a Christ-like character. And it was ultimately the principle of Satyagraha which had a towering influence over Martin Luther King when he read Jones's biography of Gandhi and it convinced him to adopt a strictly non-violent method in his struggle for civil rights.

Secondly, Gandhi's challenge to study the non-Christian religions in a more sympathetic light really struck a chord with E Stanley Jones. Upon reflection, he realised that historically Christians tended to approach other faiths 'not always with sympathetic insight to see the good, but with critical attitudes to find the bad'. From that point forward, he sought to move towards a theology of appreciation, that while remaining Christocentric, nevertheless would 'rejoice in finding truth anywhere, knowing that it was God-implemented' (72) and that God would 'lovingly gather it up in Himself and fulfil it' (ibid.).

And to him, no one embodied this reality more than Gandhi himself. For Jones, Gandhi, a Hindu, was the most 'Christ-like' man he had ever known. Of this he wrote:

We as Christians saw more in the Cross than Gandhi and put it into operation less; Gandhi saw less in the Cross than we and put it into practice more. We left the Cross a doctrine; Gandhi left it a deed. Therefore, Gandhi with his half-light and fuller practice goes beyond us in power who have fuller light and half-practice. God therefore accepts his operative deed and entrusts him with power, while He can use in only a limited way our faith which is minus the operative deed (105).

In other words, God passed by orthodoxy in order to use orthopraxy (ibid.). And when Gandhi was tragically killed on 30 January 1948, on the very day that Jones was scheduled to have a meeting with him, he would go on to call his death 'the greatest tragedy since the Son of God died on a cross' (17). It was undoubtedly that initial conversation with a friend that influenced his pioneering work in the field of interreligious dialogue, the subject to which I now turn.

At the Round Table and in the Ashram

E Stanley Jones's immersion into interreligious dialogue began in the early 1920s as a direct result of his public lecture series. These were large events that were held in various cities usually over a weekend, but sometimes lasting as long as a week. He would preach in the mornings to specifically Christian communities and then in the evenings he would hold lectures which were geared towards local intellectuals from other faiths and their topics of interest. Jones left the lectures in their hands and they were almost always facilitated or chaired by non-Christians and they were typically held in public halls, open spaces, Hindu temples, or schools and almost never in churches.¹⁰ All of this was created with the goal of having people from other faith traditions to come, listen, and participate in the lectures. These evening topics had a wide variety in subject matter, but whenever Jones himself spoke, he tended to focus solely on his own testimony and how his faith in Christ had impacted his life. He was careful never to end his own sessions with a 'call' to the Christian faith as was typical of the time. Instead, he closed his talks with a time of question and answer in which anyone who was interested in learning more about the Christian would receive an invitation for further conversation in private. It is important to note that during these sessions he would

never critique other religions, but he welcomed criticism of his own because he felt it provided an opportunity to clear up popular misconceptions about Christianity. With his characteristic sense of humour, he called these 'grilling' sessions as they would often last for two hours or more (123).

It was out of one of these public lectures that one of the Hindu chairpersons asked Jones if he would be willing to assist in convening a more private and intimate session with some of the city's top religious leaders and public officials.¹¹ Jones thought about the invitation, and then it occurred to him, 'Why not turn the whole thing into a religious Round Table Conference, asking each man [sic] to tell what religion is meaning to him in experience?' (20). He accepted the invitation and this formula ultimately became an integral part of his ministry. These interfaith gatherings would generally consist of anywhere between fifteen and forty people with Jones himself seeing to it that approximately two-thirds of the participants were non-Christians with the rest consisting of primarily Indian Christians (26). His conception of the round table itself was intentional: to demonstrate that no one person was the head of gathering and that no particular faith had primacy at the events.

The format of these dialogues was groundbreaking. Wanting to steer people away from rigid dogmatics, debate, and arguing, the goal was instead to share from each person's unique religious experience. He compared his format to the scientific method: experimentation, verification, and the sharing of results (21). Drawing from Swamiji, they would usually open the dialogues with the questions 'Have you found God? Can you tell me how to find Him?' (26). Everyone would then be asked to share their religious experiences with the conversations being geared towards 'how religion was working, what it was

doing for us, and how we could find deeper reality' (16). All of the discussion would lead to the overarching thematic questions of the dialogues: 'What does religion bring in experience? What is its value for life?' (17). Because of their revolutionary focus on experience over doctrine and comparative religion, these dialogues created an atmosphere of 'appreciation with appraisal' of all religious traditions (17). Nothing like this had ever taken place in India before, and E Stanley Jones's unique model of the round table dialogues can be seen as an early precursor to the interreligious dialogues of today.

This was not his only contribution to the field of interreligious dialogue. Beginning in 1930, Jones purchased several Ashrams, with the primary one being the location at Sat Tal, Nainital District, Uttarakhand which is still in operation today. Ashrams have been a major part of Indian spirituality for centuries and while some might argue that this was a form of cultural appropriation, he took their deep meaning of 'apart from work to heart' and made these centres vital places for spiritual retreat and renewal. Like the round table dialogues, Jones deliberately included retreatants from diverse religious backgrounds in which all participants were to have 'a willingness to search sincerely for God's truth with other members of the Ashram on a basis of complete equality'.¹² After early devotions, he describes a typical morning session like this:

The first hour was occupied with a study of the New Testament. It was not a class so much as we tried to think corporately, trying to arrive at a common mind. At the close of this hour we went into a study of Hinduism in some of its various phases led by several professors and Indian poets ... after the Hindu hour we studied Islam (this was also led by Islamic professors and authorities) ... this ran us up to eleven o'clock after which we had our

breakfast which consisted of rice and curry, which when you become accustomed to it is very palatable (194–5).

He reported that the Ashram experiences were a complete success and that participants were ‘spiritually transformed’ and returned to their work after the retreats renewed and refreshed (195). And while Christ remained at the centre of the retreats, at least for the Christian participants, they also provided an important venue for Christians and people of other faiths to actively engage one another in the contexts of lived experience and spiritual practice.

Conclusion: Reflections and Implications

In this paper, I have demonstrated that more than eighty years ago, E Stanley Jones brought together Hindus and Christians through deep, and often challenging relationships and friendships, through round table dialogues and

Ashram retreat centres that served as both a precursor and model for all the interreligious dialogue that has followed in the decades since. And all of it centred around the idea of lived experience through religion and the honest and open sharing of those experiences. Here in this brief conclusion, I will offer some reflections and implications for our discussion.

First, in the spirit of Swamiji, I cannot help but offer a bit of critical reflection. It is true that Jones was an early pioneer in bringing people of other faiths together as well as changing the face of Christian missions through contextualisation and inculturation, but while some scholars and missiologists have attempted to brand him as a religious pluralist,¹³ I am not so comfortable with such a label and I don’t think he would be either. But I have to make a key distinction here. When I say Jones would have been critical of religious pluralism, I say it in a *theological*

Dr E Stanley Jones with Dr Rajendra Prasad, the First President of India, 1950



sense and not *civically*, because as I have already demonstrated, he was a staunch proponent of religious freedom in the public square, both in the Indian context, other places in Asia, and here in America. Rather, he was critical of the theological idea that all religions are ‘essentially the same’ and the subsequent blending of the great traditions.


Speaking out against Theosophy, a popular spiritual movement of the day that advanced such religious syncretism, he said: ‘The tendency of all this is to wipe out distinctions, tone down superiorities, and have everything end in a diffused kindly feeling, or as someone has put it, “in a mush of amiability”’.¹⁴ Thus, while I might find the view in the Rig Veda that says ‘Truth is one, sages call it by various names’¹⁵ at least personally appealing, I am fairly certain that Jones himself would have rejected it. On these grounds, I find it more appropriate to say he was a civic-based pluralist and what we might call in comparative studies, a theological inclusivist, or one who extends soteriological possibilities in a broad manner, but from within the confines of one’s own religious system. In support of this view, I am reminded of his statement that through ‘comparative religions the rank and file are now seeing that God has not left himself without any witness in any land, and that truth and lofty thinking are not the exclusive possession of any race’.¹⁶ He clearly believed that God was at work in other religious traditions, through what he frequently called ‘other channels’,¹⁷ but he is also clearly talking about the Christian God.

And while this might be a disappointment to pluralistic sensibilities, I would counter and say that these theologically inclusive views from a Christian perspective were none the less revolutionary at the time, for they predate Karl Rahner’s important, though perhaps poorly worded, notion of the ‘Anonymous Christian’

and the sweeping reforms of the theological view on world religions contained in *Nostra Aetate* from the Second Vatican Council. Additionally, the trailblazing work of Jones in an interfaith capacity proves that one can be in dialogue *without* being a theological pluralist or syncretist and perhaps his seminal contributions to the field can serve as a witness in our attempts at bringing our more ‘conservative’ sisters and brothers to the table. Adopting a path based simply on the sharing of personal experiences might prove to be a way forward in what has consistently been one of the biggest challenges to interreligious dialogue and other interfaith encounters.

Furthermore, at a time when we are experiencing increasingly divisive political and cultural rhetoric, as well as a dangerous rise in nationalism where such hurtful language might cause us to fear our neighbours rather than love them, perhaps the Jones model of dialogue through experience might serve as an antidote to the poison around us. Whether we are Hindu or Christian, we should never underestimate the power of personal testimony and the sharing of our own stories in breaking down barriers. Jones himself knew that many of the participants in the round table dialogues came into the venues ready to engage in a battle of wits to defend their particular religious system against all comers, but when people began to share their experiences, ‘the atmosphere changes, a deep seriousness comes over them, for here the battle of words or of ideas—drops down to where we meet life—we are at grips with life. ... deep was to speak to deep’.¹⁸ At this level, we recognise our search for the divine or transcendent realities as being a uniting factor in what makes us fundamentally human. Thus, as faith leaders in our various communities, the sharing of our experiences is something we

should be promoting in all our local contexts. What would happen in our churches, temples, and monasteries if we invited our neighbours from other faith traditions to simply share what their faith means to them?

Finally, along these lines, I feel that the shadow of Jones looms large over all of us who are discussing this today. Here we are, seated around a table as Hindus and Christians, much as Jones and his round table participants were doing more than eighty years ago, and I cannot help but wonder what our dialogue might begin to look like if we turned these very questions back around on ourselves: Have you found God? Can you tell me how to find God? What does religion bring in experience? What is its value for life? Engaging on such poignant questions would take us out of the realm of the theoretical, if just for a moment, to matters of the heart, and it is here and only here where we find our innermost, truest selves, for as it is written in the *Chhandogya Upanishad*: 'The self is hidden in the lotus of the heart. Those who see themselves in all creatures go day by day into the world of Brahman hidden in the heart. Established in peace, they rise above consciousness to the supreme light of the Self. Immortal, free from fear, this Self is Brahman, called the True. Beyond the mortal and the immortal, he binds those worlds together. Those who know this live day after day in heaven in this very life.'¹⁹ In the E Stanley Jones model of dialogue through experience, let us seek out this space in the human heart together. 

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Dublin City Interfaith Forum: A Necessary Journey

Swami Purnananda

THE DUBLIN CITY INTERFAITH FORUM has been a shining beacon of hope for harmony, peace, and understanding in Dublin over several years. It has influenced and guided other interfaith movements throughout Ireland as well as other European cities. In order to explore it as a necessary journey, it is important to review the great revolution that has occurred in comparatively recent times, particularly in the Western world and the refreshing and optimistic opportunities it has generated.

In September 1893, a World's Parliament of Religions was held in Chicago, Illinois. It was part of the World Columbian exposition celebrations and was an attempt to create a global

dialogue of faiths. It became the birth of formal interreligious dialogue worldwide, with representatives of a wide variety of religions and significantly was dominated by the personality and inspiring words of Swami Vivekananda.¹ His impact was that he presented a new world vision of harmony that was based on an already existing ancient Vedic-Hindu structure of pluralism. More significantly for Ireland, Margaret Elizabeth Noble, known worldwide as Sister Nivedita, continued to promote the universal and ancient truth of oneness of being in our inherent Divinity.

Inevitably, the impact of focusing on shared and easily discernible values must flow through

Members of Dublin City Interfaith Forum with the Lord Mayor Mícheál MacDonncha and Archbishop Michael Jackson at the launch of the Five Marks of Interfaith Understanding in Dublin's Wood Quay Venue



and in 1965, Pope Paul VI issued *Nostrae Aetate*. It was a landmark document that showed a remarkable, dare I say Christian, spirit of generosity. It seemed to stand in stark contrast to the long held *Extra Ecclesiam Nulla Salus*—‘outside the Church there is no salvation’—as interpreted at its most extreme in various periods over the years by Popes² and Christianity in general and remains a catechetical doctrine, albeit with inclusive caveats. The significance of highlighting this, is of course, that Ireland has been identified as a predominantly Roman Catholic country and along with the Church of Ireland has played and continues to play a significant role in terms of cultural attitudes, social influences, and spiritual life. It is therefore relevant that we examine the remnants of old and lingering attitudes along with contemporary ones in order to understand the various interwoven aspects of our journey.

Hindu Approach to Other Faiths

Since reference was made to Swamiji’s inputs in the West, it is appropriate to understand Hinduism’s role in interfaith and my role in the Dublin City Interfaith Forum. For the last few years I have been an active member of the Forum as part of my mission in the propagation of Neo-Vedanta as a harmonising and practical philosophy for all. As a representative on the forum of the Hindu Religion, more properly called ‘Vedanta’, essence of Truth or Sanatana Dharma—Eternal Religion, I am always keen to point out our motherly status as the oldest extant religion in the world. I am not saying this in any boastful way, but this status is justified by its very antiquity.

Firstly, this tradition has managed to incorporate every ideal and expression of the inexpressible supreme Principle that religion calls ‘God’. Its pluralistic approach has allowed the broadest freedom of expression of the deepest

Truth. This approach has been summarised as ‘as many faiths, so many paths.’ Secondly, by this democracy in religion, the land of Hinduism’s origin, India, has given refuge to every persecuted religious adherent, including the Thomist Christians, those of the Jewish Diaspora, and the Zoroastrians, not to mention Muslim traders and invaders. Thirdly, this religion has seen multiple renaissances throughout its long history and successfully adapted to the inevitable times, absorbing ideas mostly resulting in a progressive enrichment and compatibility with contemporary changes and attitudes without disturbing the underlying current of Eternal Truth. It has been the same enduring river flowing in a solid direction but winding this way and that with the most practical flexibility. Moreover, it has no history of persecution of ‘heretics’, prophets, saints, or incarnations of any religion and even accepted the rights of the Charvakas, hedonistic atheists, to ridicule the sacred of the day. The example set is a wonderful model, not just of tolerance but acceptance. It is this spirit of breadth and depth that I have tried to give the Forum.

The Need for Religious Harmony and Dialogue

The ‘Hindu’ experience can act as a kind of role model for an Ireland in transformation. In the increasingly diverse city of Dublin and in Ireland as such, with a population of 4.86 million, there is also an increasing necessity to recognise and celebrate unity in diversity. The sharpest percentage growth in non-Irish-born residents were among Romanians, with the population more than doubling from 8,566 to 17,995, up 110 per cent, following European Union accession in 2007; immigrants from India, grew that community by 91 per cent to 17,856. The largest rise in overall terms was, of course, unsurprisingly, among the Polish-born community, which grew

from 63,090 to 1,15,193, up 83 per cent. Census statistics reflect shifts in Christian, Islamic, and Hindu religious adherents.

However, increasingly people describe themselves as 'spiritual' rather than religious. With some ten per cent of the Irish population declaring themselves as 'non-religious' in the 2016 census survey, this sector represents the second largest in terms of religious identification. The increase was commensurate with a decline in formal Roman Catholic membership that went from 93 per cent in 1991 to 84 per cent in 2011 to 78 per cent in 2016. The number of new Roman Catholic seminarians declined to a mere 15 per cent overall and this has given rise to a sense of crisis in the largest religious denomination in the country.³

The fastest growing religions between 2011 and 2016 in percentage terms were Orthodox, Hindu, and Muslim. Presbyterian and Apostolic or Pentecostal all showed declines, but the category of Other Christians showed the largest decline compared with 2011—a fall of 9.1 per cent from 41,161 in 2011 to 37,427 in 2016.⁴

These statistics bring up two questions: are we duty bound to know our neighbours for a harmonious society and should religions be concerned at those registered as non-religious? Since these questions affect all religions, whether they are formally organised like Christian religions or informally organised like Hinduism and Buddhism, it is rational and necessary that faiths are living examples of the love they espouse and highlight the easily discernible similarities rather than the differences through real solidarity and dialogue. Historically, prior to the world wars of the twentieth century, more blood was shed in the name of God and religion than any other cause in the world. Even today there is a felt urge for Christians and Muslims to proselytise based on a kind of exclusivism and

inferred superiority that some may say subtly impinges on the human right for freedom of belief under the protective 'clause' of freedom of speech. Fanatics and bigots of all religions do not want any form of co-operative dialogue or understanding; then there are the inclusivists, claiming to be pluralists, who wish to dialogue, but not understand and are 'drinking tea with the enemy', as it were.

Therefore, there is a dire universal need for genuine religious dialogue, mutual learning, and understanding. In Ireland, not only is this need felt, but, because of the relative novelty of multiculturalism and the presence of multi-faiths there is a wonderfully fresh opportunity to address issues from the start and to craft an exemplary model for the rest of the world. There is a need to progressively reform traditional attitudes that habitually exclude non-Abrahamic faiths in national events, such as the inauguration of the Uachtarán na hÉireann, the President of Ireland. This model would address mutual issues across traditions and show the disillusioned sceptics that religions do indeed adhere to the same lofty human values that lead to the goal of freedom, variously termed salvation, perfection, kingdom of heaven, nirvana, and so on.

The Key Ingredient for Interfaith Interaction

I believe this model is present and developing in the Dublin City Interfaith Forum. It was with great delight, therefore, that my first experience of the Dublin City Interfaith Forum was a peace march through Dublin City to celebrate the annual United Nations Peace Day. Side by side, shoulder to shoulder, leaders of every main religion in Ireland stood, marched, and joked in a remarkable unitive spirit of comradeship.

My real introduction to the Forum was,

however at an interfaith retreat held at the Corrymeela Community Centre, where I felt free in initial conversations to listen and contribute to the overall constitution and vision of the movement. The Corrymeela Community is a Christian community in Northern Ireland whose objective is the promotion of reconciliation and peace-building through the healing of social, religious, and political divisions. It seemed a perfect venue for the Forum to consolidate its ideas and plans. I found that the most wonderful characteristic of the Forum was our mutual sense of spirituality, prayerfulness, and genuine willingness to listen that we share. I quickly became friends with members; we obviously shared an enthusiasm, kindness, goal, and vision. I believe this friendship to be the most important ingredient to any interfaith interaction.

The Rewards of Perseverance, Faith, and Adaptability

When a noble idea arises, it gets sustained by sudden and timely events. For a period, the work of the Dublin City Interfaith Forum stalled due to a paucity of funds; but by way of adjustment, we received the support of the Dublin City Council.

They had always granted financial and logistic support, but then, they made us their own. Understanding the great benefit of sponsoring interfaith ideals, the Dublin Lord Mayor and City officials took the initiative in devising and granting an eight-point charter that gave faith leaders a commitment to championing the all-inclusive freedom to practise religions, dedicate them to the noblest values for the social benefit of all, promote inter-belief and inter community dialogue, and eradicate exclusivism; also to share experiences for mutual benefit, encourage the young to appreciate religious diversity, develop an appreciation of similarities in religions and

shared values and finally to create social conditions that promote peace, joy, and hope.

It was the Forum's Church of Ireland's delegate, Archbishop Michael Jackson, who took these principles to a new and practical level. He translated them into the five marks of the Anglican Communion's Mission and distilled them into five points beginning with the letter 'T'. These points can be adapted and implemented by every one of the religions represented on the Forum. The following is our Hindu adaptation and adoption:

- *Tell*: To proclaim the inner Divinity of a person.
- *Teach*: To teach and assist the manifestation of this Divinity from within.
- *Tend*: To serve the Divinity in a person.
- *Transform*: To transform negative situations.
- *Treasure*: To safeguard sacred Nature and Mother Earth.

This was an initiative aimed to directly promote interfaith understanding and was officially launched by the Lord Mayor of Dublin and the Archbishop and is illustrative of the necessity and good fortune of civic support for its momentum. By distilling what was termed the 'Five Marks of Interfaith Understanding' and putting it into the church-going domain, it offered a practical way for 'Irish church goers to reach out to their neighbours of all faiths to dispel the mistrust that sometimes leads to the isolation of minority religious groups'.⁵ This is a quote from Archbishop Jackson's Initiative address on 2 February 2018 at Wood Quay, Dublin. Respect for other religions, particularly minority religious communities, in Ireland through special printed literature in churches is so progressive that it challenges other major religions to follow suit and demonstrate their genuine commitment to the disbandment of isolationist and elitist attitudes.

These attitudes make people feel estranged, probably amidst other difficult circumstances that serve to highlight their differences. So profoundly and beautifully, the great saint the Holy Mother Sarada Devi prayed that we may not treat others as strangers but learn to make the whole world our own.

Putting Principles into Practice

Whenever Dublin Interfaith members are in the public eye, their mutual respect and love is patently obvious as well as the message that Truth transcends apparent differences. Of the many interfaith projects, one of the most potent and impressive in Dublin in this regard is a project called 'Faith in the City'; this is where people of different religions join our members at their respective places of worship and experience and learn the similarities and differences between religions. The public have the chance to ask questions and socially interact with others. Interfaith aims are accomplished here as the public can witness exemplary interfaith interaction first hand, add to their knowledge, shift any erroneous preconceived ideas, broaden their experience, and enjoy a greater sense of humanity at depth.

Any worthwhile activity should surely be accompanied by a global vision and be valid for millennia to come, but every progressive step will have its creative role in the same way that a building is planned and constructed. Interfaith movements can and should learn from others' experiences. The Dublin City approach has impressed visiting civic leaders from regions that may have more inherent antagonistic attitudes to deal with. The Dublin City Interfaith Forum model has incorporated feedback and coordination with Garda representatives, visiting international religious leaders, interfaith groups from other countries and visiting groups of university students from the US. All of this shows

a vibrancy of interaction that has an influence beyond the Irish geographic border.

The Potential Minefield

I do not think it is helpful to categorise levels of dialogue as 'ecumenical', 'interfaith', and 'inter-religious' as some have done. 'Ecumenism' referring to Christian sharing, for example joint religious services, and so on; 'interfaith', referring to Abrahamic religious interaction and 'interreligious' being dialogue with non-Abrahamic faiths and traditions. These attitudes tend to nurture and convey the idea of a select chosen people, race, or creed and should surely be seen as abhorrently divisive and a violation of the precious notion of a loving and caring creative Divinity. Furthermore, they are reminiscent of historical colonial dominance, slavery, mass slaughter, invasions and wars—all of which are anathema to the fundamental ethos of loving kindness, empathy, and the 'golden rule' that all religions, without exception adhere to.

When religions decide that in a modern world it is more politically expedient to dialogue than fight, I believe the motive is wrong. Salesmanship and competitive religion can never be a part of the mutual understanding required for interfaith activity. Empathy requires astute listening skills and reaching out, emotionally to the other, but more crucially seeing and feeling the Divine Presence in our neighbour. Profoundly Lord Jesus defines who one's neighbour is in the story of the Good Samaritan.⁶ Non-Abrahamic religions are quite frankly baffled at what is considered an impolite intrusion at best and an aggressive assault at worst on the part of proselytisers. Certainly, Abrahamic faiths can easily find scripturally and theologically derived justifications for evangelical work and conversion, but each must seriously consider the rationale, humanitarian and historical aspects of

their actions, and the real inner meaning of their founding ‘Giant Waves’ of Divine messengers that left their impact for millennia.

To avoid the various traps, a great deal of sensitivity is required and that means much ignorance, preconceptions, and erroneous assumptions have to be identified and replaced with accurate knowledge, openness to new facts, and shifting paradigms, but above all, as the title of the little book of Brother Lawrence says, ‘The Practice of the Presence of God.’⁷

A wonderful example of the delicate balance is a case in Spain. In 2017, in a spirit of typical Spanish carnival frenzy, and ironically land of the infamous Spanish Inquisition, a Spanish Bishop apologised for an event in his diocese during which a Lord Ganesha, literally Lord of all creatures, a popular Hindu portrayal of God, was processed around a Catholic church. The priest who allowed it resigned from his position as Vicar General.⁸ One might easily wonder how a statue of the Virgin Mary can be similarly processed, but not a different form? Father Bede Griffiths OSB, known and revered for his work in Christian-Hindu relations was challenged by an orthodox Hindu.⁹ The purport of the challenge was: ‘You have taken the sacred robe of sannyasa, Hindu renunciant, and made yourself a swami, a Hindu monk, adopting the name Swami Dayananda and teaching Christianity in a Hindu-style ashrama, spiritual hermitage, but no one initiated you into the ancient monastic order of sannyasa and could we also dress like a Christian Benedictine and preach Hinduism in a church in Rome? If not, why not?’ It is a valid question and contrasts some of the difficulties of transitioning from tolerance to acceptance.

How Much Further?

We have started our journey here in Ireland and it has been a wonderful start, but we have a long

way to go. Significant progress would be made when interfaith involvement is felt throughout Ireland. Already inclusive legislation will do away with the exclusivist ethos that became the controlling norm in many Irish schools. A new curriculum for junior schools has now been formulated to include five faiths instead of three and extending this further would be a great step.

The closed traditional mindset would be seen when non-Abrahamic Faiths are acknowledged as part of national life, such as the President’s inauguration, commemoration days, and Dáil Éireann, Assembly of Ireland, prayers. Currently they are excluded and feel like ‘second class’ citizens; religions need to challenge themselves and learn from each other so that no one religion will feel that they have ‘the fullness of truth’. The history of religious enrichment has been marked by a syncretism, an example of which was early Irish Christianity. A modern example is the popularly used mindfulness programmes derived from Hindu’s *Smriti* and Buddhism’s *Sati*. The adoption of yoga is another example. From a Hindu point of view, it would be wonderful if Hindu-phobic statements made wittingly or unwittingly such as ‘Hinduism is a polytheistic religion’, rather than a pluralistic one, were adjusted to reflect a better accuracy. When an Irish person is asked what the main three world religions are, and they no longer answer Christianity, Islam, and Judaism, but Christianity, Islam, and Hinduism then we will see Ireland meshing with the wider world.

All this requires time for growth, for attitudes are still deeply ingrained in the Irish psyche; growth can be stimulated but never forced and patience, purity, and perseverance are required. The next generations will have very different approaches as the new future unfolds. One more thing. Religions must surely be

compatible with other branches of knowledge, primarily modern science or they will be met with rational scepticism. In some ways this is where religions could find their greatest common ground and benefit from a new enthused generation of nation builders.

I am optimistic that we will have a truly all-inclusive society, led by the exemplary members of different faiths who sincerely and selflessly live out their religion. We believe that the Lord of the universe is irresistibly manifesting from within to evolve an Irish community that reflects Irish generosity of spirit that has served as an undercurrent since ancient times.


Swamiji, during his closing remarks at the Parliament of Religions in 1893 prayed thus:

If anyone here hopes that this unity will come by the triumph of any one of the religions and the destruction of the other, to him I say, 'Brother, yours is an impossible hope'. Do I wish that the Christian would become Hindu? God forbid. Do I wish that the Hindu or Buddhist would become Christian? God forbid.

The seed is put in the ground, and earth and air and water are placed around it. Does the seed become the earth, or the air, or the water? No. It becomes a plant. It develops after the law of its own growth, assimilates the air, the earth, and the water, converts them into plant substance, and grows into a plant.

Similar is the case with religion. The Christian is not to become a Hindu or a Buddhist, nor a Hindu or a Buddhist to become a Christian. But each must assimilate the spirit of the others and yet preserve his individuality and grow according to his own law of growth.

... Holiness, purity and charity are not the exclusive possessions of any church in the world, and every system has produced men and women of the most exalted character. In the face of this evidence, if anybody dreams of the exclusive survival of his own religion and the destruction

of the others, I pity him from the bottom of my heart, and point out to him that upon the banner of every religion will soon be written in spite of resistance: 'Help and not fight', 'Assimilation and not Destruction', 'Harmony and Peace and not Dissension'.¹⁰ 

Notes and References

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Becoming–Being, Unmanifest–Manifested

Alberto Martin

SRI KRISHNA: ‘What exists cannot cease to exist, and what exists not cannot come into existence.’¹ ‘How could being be produced from non-being?’ or, to put it the other way around, ‘How can non-being “become” being?’

A story:

A young boy asked his nanny to tell him a story, and the nanny told him the following story to which the boy listened with great attention.

Once upon a time in a city which did not exist, there were three princes who were brave and happy. Of them two were unborn and the third had not been conceived. Unfortunately, all their relatives died. The princes left their native city to go elsewhere. Very soon, unable to bear the heat of the sun, they fell into a swoon. Their feet were burnt by hot sand. The tips of grass pierced them. They reached the shade of three trees, of which two did not exist and the third had not even been planted. After resting there for some time and eating the fruits of those trees, they proceeded further. ...

O Rāma, when the little boy heard this he was thrilled.

What is known as the creation of the world is no more real than this story of the young boy. This world is nothing but pure hallucination. It is nothing more than an idea. In the infinite consciousness the idea of creation arose: and that is what is. O Rāma, this world is nothing more than an idea; all the objects of consciousness in this world are just an idea; reject the error (dirt) of ideation and be free of ideas; remain rooted in truth and attain peace.²

Is this world not more than an idea?

Vidyaranya Swami paraphrases this story as

the nanny tells the ridiculously impossible story, the child is starry-eyed and fascinated, not wanting the story to ever end. He listens with even more avid interest asking the nanny: ‘Hmmm ... tell me, tell me ... what happened next?’ The sage points out the obsession that defines human nature, *avidya*, ignorance, to figure out everything in a neat question-answer format, this obsession with coming out with the perfect ‘creation’ theories, not any different from the child’s stories, as the real obstacle to ‘self-knowledge’.

But another explanation of the thrill and enchantment of the boy while listening to the story is possible. Is it not normal that children become wide-eyed on listening to any fantastic story, a fairy tale, one that stretches the limits of anyone’s imagination? Innocence, gullibility, is one thing. Encounter with mystery, the unknown, the ‘unheard of’ is another. Is there anything more mysterious than creation, the wonder that is Nature and of whatever reality is behind our own being? Is everything not a mystery? Not different is the sense of awe which a mature man, the philosopher Kant, experienced when contemplating the starry sky above and the moral imperative in his interior. Going to another extreme is the similar sentiment behind that statement often attributed to the Western theologian Tertullian: ‘*Credo quia absurdum est*; I believe it because it is absurd’, inveighing against Greek rationalism.³

Is the world, existence, a mystery? Something absurd?

There is another explication or account for

that ‘mystery’, and it is coming from the meta-physical, rational-mystical, or intuitive, tradition of Advaita Vedanta: it tells of the timeless descending, as it were, into time, of the unmanifest becoming manifested, of the limitless appearing to be limited.

Words, concepts, are unavoidable and, in this context, ‘experience’ and ‘knowledge’, are irreplaceable—experience-knowledge or *chit*, as one description of the ‘event’. Consciousness, being the ultimate witness, sums it all up and, in itself, is not a concept. It does not admit of a description and is not relational. Intuition tells us that there cannot be more than one reality—one overarching truth, one existence, one Intelligence. *Sat-chit-ananda* or Intelligence-space, *chit-akasha* or Intelligence-energy, Shiva-Shakti are expressions that convey, or try to convey, *that* which is inexpressible, indefinable.

Creation—Emanation—No Creation?

Has the world been created or somehow emanated from the unmanifest dimension of Atman or Brahman, or has a world always existed along with Brahman as its manifestation? We can relate the first option to the doctrine of ‘apparent creation’, and the second to that of ‘no creation’. There would be a third option: ‘intermittent manifestation, *mahapralaya*’, but this belongs to the world of mythology, persuasive as it may sound.⁴

‘At the beginning of all things, there was neither being nor non-being, and what existed was an impenetrable darkness.’⁵

The manifested universe, the world of names and forms, is called *sat*, and its unmanifested condition *asat*. The possible or potential is prior to the actual. ‘From the unmanifested, *asat*, the world of names and forms, *sat*, is said to arise.’⁶

Asat, non-existent, does not mean absolute non-being. It is a state in which name and form were not manifested: *avyakṛta-nama-rupam* (399).

In the *Chhandogya Upanishad* it is said: ‘In the beginning this was not-being. That was being; it came into existence.’⁷ In Radhakrishnan’s translation: ‘In the beginning this (world) was non-existent. It became existent. It grew.’⁸

As Valerie J Roebuck notes, this is in apparent disagreement with the following: ‘In the beginning, good lad, this was being, one alone without a second.’⁹ Some say:

In the beginning this was not-being, one alone without a second. From that not-being, being was produced. ‘But, good lad, how could that be?’, he said. ‘How could being be produced from non-being? In the beginning, good lad, surely this was being, one alone without a second.’

It thought, ‘Let me become many; let me be born.’¹⁰

Becoming—Being

‘How could being be produced from non-being?’ Or, to put it the other way around, ‘How can non-being “become” being?’ As we can see this is not possible. Even considering that the world ‘comes’ ultimately from, or is caused by, God or Consciousness-Atman-Brahman, the Advaita doctrine that the effect is not other than the cause, or that the cause inheres in the effect, tells us that there is no cause for the world, no creation at all—and also, coincidentally, that there is no time involved. What is, is from ‘all time’, ever, as it were, it is always ‘there’. One could use the word ‘source’ to cover the problem of ‘origins’ concerning the world of manifestation, and thus satisfy the young boy of the story, whose mind is programmed to expect a cause for everything, and everything happening in sequence, but it may be preferable to call it ‘substratum’, *adhiṣṭhanam*.

However, from the standpoint of Advaita, becoming is related to the empirical, *vyavaharika*, viewpoint, where it has practical validity.

It is applicable to the disciplines of psychology, biology, and the process of knowledge-knowing, and so on.

What about the notions of apparent transformation, *vivarta-vada*, and real transformation, *parinama-vada*, which appear to be related to becoming one way or another? The latter, promoted by Sankhya philosophy, is refuted by Acharya Shankara and his followers as a metaphysical theory related to the cause of the world; this leaves aside the frequently quoted example of milk turning into curds of phenomenal reality, which is taken to be a real transformation.

God, or the Supreme, has to be both transcendent and immanent, since God cannot be exhausted by God's creation, but also there is nothing that is not divine in its essence; God is in all things. As from Meister Eckhart, 'Before creation, God was not God', transcendence, and 'God is in the creatures, but above them', transcendence-immanence. In the tradition of Advaita Vedanta, *a-dvaita*, not two, there is the distinction between God creator, *saguna* Brahman, *ishvara*, and *nirguna* Brahman, this last without determinations, undefinable, attributeless, and unknowable by the mind. Clearly, these 'two' cannot be separated, 'they' are not two, but the former, though in 'itself' unmanifest, has a direct, personal relationship with all creatures. The personal God cannot not be sentient, for God is pure love and unadulterated happiness or bliss and is participated in, in various degrees, by sentient creatures. But the Absolute, *nirguna* Brahman, or pure Consciousness, ultimate Reality, is above human emotions and untouched by human actions and volitions, as the Absolute is above right and wrong, good and bad, and all polarities; it is described in the Upanishads as 'eye of the eye, ear of the ear, mind of the mind'¹¹ as a neutral witness, 'witness Consciousness.' It is not, and cannot be, an object of worship, for it is our real identity, the only subject there is.

Unmanifest-Manifested— Transcendence-Immanence

There are two pairs of complementary concepts which are intimately related to the foregoing and that will now be briefly covered: 1) Transcendence-immanence, and 2) Unmanifest-manifested.

Avyakta—Principle—Unity—Being—*Puruṣa*—Real—Substance—Essence

Vyakta—Manifestation—Multiplicity—Becoming—*Prakṛiti*—Unreal—Accident—Form

The metaphysical doctrine of transcendence-immanence points at an apparent distinction, without the need for calling forth time, for one can see it as timeless or instantaneous. Further, one can say, paradoxically, that 'what is or appears to be transcendent inheres, or is immanent, in the universe of "forms and names"'. All is One. The consequence, then, is that there is no such distinction or dichotomy 'in reality', it being merely conceptual. This would also do away with the pair unmanifest-manifested; again, these are mere concepts, though with a provisional value or utility.

For, is Consciousness-Atman-Brahman transcendent, or is it so apparently and only to the limited or unprepared mind? Are these opposing concepts—transcendent-immanent—just mere concepts? The same applies to the other pair: unmanifest-manifested. Reality, Consciousness-Atman, or *sat-chit*, is a priori unchanging, immutable; and it is said that it is unknowable to or by the mind. But the awakened mind merges with pure Consciousness and it is then understood that the apparent multiplicity of names, forms, the gross and the subtle, inner and outer, are nothing more than the way Reality or Consciousness presents itself, that 'they' are not separate or different from It. Reality, then, is self-evident.

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YOUNG EYES

Educating the Underprivileged

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INDIA is one of the countries that are struggling with the problem of mass illiteracy even today. Even though primary schools have been set up in practically every village, the rate of dropouts continues to be more than fifty per cent. The ground reality of average elementary schools in rural districts and other backward areas is grim. The goal of universal education eludes India, a country suffering from a lack of quality within its abundant human resource.

The need of the hour is to set up an effective education system, specially meant for students who are deprived of quality education due to certain social and economic reasons. The elementary schools set up in various backward regions of India, fail to provide effective education to children due to lack of well-qualified faculty, non-regularity of lessons, and finally the lack of understanding of the true importance of education in today's world. However, this problem too has got a solution. The good schools in urban areas can lend support to these underprivileged children.

The usual practice is that after the completion of a day in school the pupils and faculty leave for home, but the utility of the school building can be extended to much more than that so that it succeeds to meet the requirements of these needy children. After pupils leave, the school can be used to serve the impecunious children for a couple of hours more, with basic education. The problem of lack of good educators can be sorted out by giving the middle school children the responsibility to teach the primary school students.

After all, the aim is to provide basic education to each and every section of society. This education need not drive the students to multinational companies. Interest for teaching can be propagated among the young educators by providing them with certain incentives or scholarships based on the number of hours a student devotes to teaching the underprivileged. This scholarship can be set in a way that they help the students in their higher education. Of course, a student must not neglect her or his own academics in an attempt




to earn more incentives by spending more time in teaching, rather than studying one's own lessons. To sort out this problem, arrangements for different shifts can be made, where a group of students get to teach for a certain number of hours on only certain allotted days, and after the completion of their shift, another group of students take over and teach in the same manner.


The syllabi for these children, unlike the city-born children, should be more job-oriented and should also deal with the actual scenario of the modern world. The aim should not only be to create global citizens out of them, but of freeing them from poverty and unemployment caused mainly due to the lack of basic knowledge. Job-oriented lessons will not only boost their interests in studying but also prepare them for the future, right from a very young age. They must also get to know through education, the mistakes they have been committing from generation to generation and how they have been suffering from various causes without prior knowledge about them.

Education on exploitation should also be imparted to these students to spread general awareness among them. Along with this, they must be armed with sufficient knowledge of epidemics, which indeed are quite commonplace in a country like India, and how to prevent them. Workshops should also be held to educate them about community empowerment, health and livelihood, social development, and also instil in them moral values and hospitality. This will not only lead to the upliftment of the impecunious section of society but also will succeed in freeing India from various problems with the very common cause of the lack of proper education.

Now, the first and foremost goal for India must be to uplift the underprivileged section of society. Only then will perish the problems related to exploitation, unemployment, epidemics, and lack of general awareness. A country with no

quality in its resources is as good as a box of ornaments, which come to no good usage, because as Aristotle said: 'Education is an ornament in prosperity, but a refuge in adversity.' 

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So there is no becoming *in reality*, only an 'act' of understanding, in the mind, which henceforth ceases to be mind and is transmuted, as it were, into pure Consciousness. This act or 'vision' cannot be said to happen in or within time, and it certainly does not pertain to the 'individual' as such—it is timeless and, one could say, gratuitous. By this act or vision timelessness bursts into time, which, along with space, and everything else, is but a mere appearance, a presentation, or disguise, of the changeless Absolute. 

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3. See Geoffrey D Dunn, *Tertullian* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 31.
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5. Rig Veda, 5.10.129.
6. *Taittiriya Upanishad*, 2.7.1; Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan and Daniel E Bassuk, *Incarnation in Hinduism and Christianity: The Myth of the God-man* (Atlantic Highlands NJ: Humanities, 1987), 549.
7. *Chhandogya Upanishad*, 3.19; *The Upanishads*, trans. and ed. Valerie J Roebuck (London: Penguin, 2003).
8. *Incarnation in Hinduism and Christianity*, 399.
9. In Note 36, Roebuck writes: 'That was being: Or perhaps, "it became being", though the verb used is *asat*, not *abhavat*'.
10. *Chhandogya Upanishad*, 6.2.1–3.
11. *Kena Upanishad*, 1–2.

BALABODHA

Ancient Wisdom Made Easy

Acharya

THE WORD *acharya* is a commonly used Sanskrit word. It is used by people, who do not even know Sanskrit, as it is present in almost every Indian language. The widely used meaning of the word *acharya* is teacher. However, it is necessary to see the other meanings and the origins of this Sanskrit word. Sanskrit is a classical language like Greek, Latin, and Persian. And in Sanskrit, as in most classical languages, most words are derived from a stem or root.

The word *acharya* is derived by adding the *aa* prefix and *nyat* suffix to the root verb *char*, which means to go, eat, behave, act, move, walk, graze, follow, practise, tremble, shake, be animate, being formerly, late, locomotive, unsteady, wandering, being, and living. So, *acharya* means one who goes, eats, behaves, acts, moves, walks, grazes, follows, practises, trembles, shakes, is animate, was formerly, was late, is locomotive, unsteady, wandering, being, and living. The word *acharya* also means a person who expounds the meaning of mantras, teacher, preceptor, spiritual guide, holy teacher, a person who gives the sacred thread to a pupil, one who teaches the Vedas, one who propounds a particular doctrine, learned, venerable, an adviser or preceptor of a Vedic sacrifice, an epithet of Drona, a degree or title of proficiency, one who knows and teaches the rules, and one who leads by example.

According to Sanatana Dharma *acharya* is not a person having merely the knowledge of the scriptures, but one who practises the teachings of the scriptures and knows all the practical ramifications of such practice from one's own

experience. Swami Vivekananda said that while it was easy to find a teacher to learn secular subjects like physics, chemistry, or mathematics, it was quite difficult to find a spiritual teacher or *acharya*. The reason he gave for this difficulty was that while it was sufficient for a teacher of secular subjects to have expertise in their subjects and it did not matter what their moral compass was or how their lifestyle was, in the case of a spiritual teacher it was paramount that the teacher practised what she or he taught. Swamiji also said that when an *acharya* teaches spirituality, it is not just the wisdom contained in the scriptures that gets transferred from the teacher to the pupil, but a part of the spiritual energy of the teacher, in fact, a part of the teacher's character, is transferred. That is why it is important that the *acharya* is established in the highest spiritual principle, the ultimate Reality, Brahman.

The Upanishads describe that the best *acharya*, spiritual teacher, or guru is one who is thoroughly well-versed in the scriptures, lives on alms, does not have any craving for the world, and is established in Brahman. It was the tradition to completely emulate one's *acharya*, because the life of the *acharya* was flawless and following in the footsteps of the *acharya* could easily lead one to spiritual fulfilment. Jainism considers an *acharya* to be one among the five *parameshthis*, greatest gurus of the Jain religion. In Sanatana Dharma, the word *acharya* has also been used as a title for great prophets or teachers like Acharya Shankara, Ramanujacharya, Madhvacharya, and so on.



TRADITIONAL TALES

The Faith that Brought a Miracle

(Continued from the previous issue)

MAUJI SAT STILL under a tree like a stone for a while. His mind was caught up with how the brahmana had held his nose, closed his eyes, sat like that for some time, and had a vision of God. Mauji did not have a thinking faculty of his own. Hence, he completely believed the brahmana's words. Mauji removed the only clothing that he owned and dipped into the river several times just as the brahmana had done. After returning to the bank, he wore his clothes again. He sat in a place and closed his eyes. He held his nose tightly. He believed that he would also have a vision of God, the moment he closed his eyes. However, when he closed his eyes, he could only see darkness; he did not get the vision of any god nor did he get the vision of any goddess.

Mauji was very angry that he did not get the vision of God that the brahmana had got. He could not understand why he did not get the vision of God. He was worried that he did not close his eyes properly. Hence, he closed his eyes a little tighter. Yet, God eluded him. His anger was rising. Some moments passed thus. He thought: 'Am I unable to see God because I have not properly closed my nose?' As soon as this thought struck him, he tightly held his nose and closed it! All that happened was that his breath was obstructed; God did not appear.

However, Mauji was not one to give up. He said to himself: 'Even if I die, I have to see God by whatever means. I will not loosen the grip on my nose till I see God.' It was his nature to

see the end of his resolves. His adamancy was about to take his life. Mauji's condition became very bad.

5

God is here, there, everywhere, and is without any boundaries or limits. God knows instantaneously wherever, whenever, whatever happens. God instantly experiences all suffering of all living beings. It is believed that this truth is the living cord that connects with the huge snake Adishesha, who is the bed on which Lord Vishnu reclines. The danger to the life of the cowherd Mauji rattled Adishesha, the bed of Lord Vishnu, and Lord Vishnu appeared before Mauji, who was about to lose his life, and lovingly said: 'Child, Mauji! Open your eyes. See, I am the God you wanted to see.'

Mauji opened his eyes at these words of the Lord. He loosened his grip on his nose. He took in some breath and made himself comfortable. Then Mauji had a talk with the Lord.

Mauji: Who are you? Why did you come here?

Lord: I am the God you wanted to see. I came here to give you my vision.

Mauji: Is that so? What a great news that is! And what proof do you have that you are God?

Lord: I will give you whatever proof you want.

Mauji: You cannot fool me by making up stories. Just now, that brahmana told that he had seen you some time ago. He would have gone only some distance. I will run now and bring him

here. I will believe you only if he tells that you are the God that he saw. Do you understand?

The Lord accepted Mauji's idea.

Mauji: I do not know you. I have never seen you before. What would I do if you run from here by the time I bring back the brahmana? You are a stranger. I will not trust you and leave you alone here. (After thinking for a while) I think I should tie you to the tree by the riverside till I bring back the brahmana. What do you say?

The Lord accepted to this too. Not only that, Lord Vishnu himself went near the tree! Mauji removed some ropes from the necks of some of the cows that were grazing there. He joined all those ropes into a strong and big rope. With that rope, he tightly tied the Lord to the tree, so that he could not even move an inch. Mauji ensured several times that he had strongly tied the Lord to the tree and that he could not free himself and run away. Then Mauji ran, panting, in the

search of the brahmana. He saw the brahmana after running about half a mile.

Mauji called out to the brahmana: 'Sir, please stop! The Lord came after you left. I have tied him to a tree. Please come to the tree and identify whether he is the God that you saw.'

The brahmana did not understand why the cowherd boy was chasing him in this manner. He became suspicious and wondered if the cowherd boy was after his cloth bag, and was calling out to him in this manner to dupe him. As soon as this thought crossed the brahmana's mind, he ran for his life. However, Mauji was also persistent. He ran faster and caught the hands of the brahmana. The brahmana tried his best to free himself. However, he could not get rid of Mauji's iron grip. Mauji pushed the brahmana to the tree by the riverside, saying: 'Sir, please come just for a while to the bank of the river.'

(To be continued)



REVIEWS

For review in PRABUDDHA BHARATA,
publishers need to send **two** copies of their latest publications



The Princeton Handbook of Poetic Terms

Edited by Roland Greene and Stephen Cushman

Princeton University Press, 41 William Street, Princeton, New Jersey 08540. USA. Website: <https://press.princeton.edu>. 2016. 456 pp. \$35. PB. ISBN 9780691170435.

One has only to read carefully the entry on the epic (100–12) in the book under review to understand the importance of this book and *The Princeton Handbook of World Poetries* edited by the same editors, reviewed in the last issue of this journal by this reviewer. For decades both scholars and students have been quoting Clive Staples Lewis's distinction of epics from Lewis's *A Preface to Paradise Lost* (1942) without bothering to go beyond that pioneering work on John Milton. The more ingenious ones iteratively add a reference or two to Cecil Maurice Bowra's *From Virgil to Milton* (1945) and others, whenever they can, in the spirit of name-dropping so familiar in literary academia today, mention Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin's 'Epic and the Novel' from his *The Dialogic Imagination* (1981). This, when the study of the epic has meaningfully expanded to demand separate sections on the 'history' and the 'theory' of this genre.

The women-pericope in the epic (105–6) and the scrupulous scholarship which informs it, yields an interesting fact: the *infelix* life of Dido, queen of Carthage, was mourned by none other than St Augustine of Hippo (105). It is to be noted that all mystics have a literary turn of mind and interiorise myth qua fiction, albeit poetry. In a very different context, we can and should, draw a parallel with Abhinavagupta, who not only continues to inspire Kashmiri Shaivite praxes, but his corpus on aesthetics will quicken the arts for all times to come.

Self-proclaimed savants miss the connection of the epic to the numinous continuing to contaminate literary studies in a manner that Sheldon Pollock, for instance, continues to denude Sanskrit texts of their *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*. Georg Lukács's and Bakhtin's contestations about the epic notwithstanding, the classical epic 'was [not] effaced by modernity or the birth of the novel. On the contrary, literary modernism ... which was deeply influenced by the unprecedented violence of World War I, brought with it an interest in reviving and reincorporating the ... [traditional epic] ... [James Joyce's] *Ulysses* translates the vast scope of the Homeric epic' (111). Moreover, works like Derek Walcott's *Omeros* (1990) being 'explicitly political' like Virgilian epics brings 'to light the effects of colonialism and slavery' on Caribbean subjects 'imbuing' them with 'epic importance and dignity' (111). This close reading of the entry on the epic performed here shows why this book is indispensable for transcending obscurantism in literary studies. Often, literary scholars forget that Aristotle, and even Plato before Aristotle, explicitly and implicitly, respectively, prioritised the arts and especially (epic) poetry over history and philosophy. It is less important to know about the philosophy of cognition, so to say, than of the reasons why the young St Augustine cried over Dido's shame.

The 'Pros and Cons of Scansion' is essential reading for those who consider the ability to scan poetry as a necessary evil to clear literature examinations. 'Might it be wiser ... to direct attention to phrasal and clausal arrangements in verse lines rather than focusing on little two- and three-syllable units?' (318); this is not a question anyone seriously engages in since 'Scansion and metrical analysis have served literary scholarship and education in the past and can [redundantly] continue to do so in the future' (319). The entries on 'Scansion' (314–9) and 'Simile' (322–4) are examples of what literary studies is all about.

Literary scholarship is about meticulous open-ended literary sleuthing and non-jargon-laden stylistics. While Virgilian, Dantean, and Spenserian similes are discussed (323), the focus on P B Shelley's 'habitual' (323) use of simile is refreshing and a testimony to the research that had gone into writing this entry. The fact that similes like sonnets have radical differences, which go beyond explicit comparison is often missed by many. The book under review is a necessary corrective to half-baked learning. How many of us knew that the Abbot of Tivoli was instrumental in establishing the octave-sestet sonnet form (328), which finally led to the Miltonic sonnet (329)?

Before concluding this review, one must mention the entry on 'Synecdoche' (360–2) which is a tour de force in contemporary semiotics and pertinently refers to Tzvetan Todorov's and Group μ 's contribution (361) to the construction of synecdoche as a postmodernist trope. It is generally not noticed that synecdoche, within anthropology, 'mediates between the social structure and the species and genera found in nature ... [analogically] ... Synecdoche has become a crucial trope in arguments between environmentalists and commercial interests' (361). Once again we find that the structuralist connections between anthropology and literary studies, which started with literature scholars reading Claude Lévi-Strauss's *Tristes Tropiques* (1955) in the last century reaffirmed as a more nuanced understanding of synecdoche as an ironical ecocritical or anthropological qualia.

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**Object-Oriented Ontology:
A New Theory of Everything**
Graham Harman

Pelican, Penguin Random House, 20 Vauxhall Bridge Road London, SW1V 2SA, UK. Website: <https://www.penguin.co.uk/>. 2018. 304 pp. £8.99. PB. ISBN 9780241269152.

If Object-Oriented Ontology (ooo) is correct, only then would David Peter Lawrence's chapter 'The Linguistics and Cosmology of Agency in

Nondual Kashmiri Śaiva Thought' in *Free Will, Agency and Selfhood in Indian Philosophy*, be a foundational exegetical error within the Pratyabhijna school of Somananda, Utpaladeva, and Abhinavagupta (See *Free Will, Agency, and Selfhood in Indian Philosophy*, eds Matthew R Dasti and Edwin F Bryant (New Delhi: Oxford University, 2018), 210–31). Lawrence agrees with David Gordon White's and Sudhir Kakar's libidinal understanding of the Pratyabhijna school's grammatical persons' participation in morally wrong praxes that stand rejected by Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Saradananda, and a contemporary living practitioner of the Shakta rhizome of the Anutara Trika. If Graham Harman is foundationally right, only then is Simone Weil's *Is There a Marxist Doctrine?* (1943) right. Analysing the whatness of history, it is easy to see that David Peter Lawrence is wrong since David Gordon White in his corpus is wrong. Both White and Lawrence have applied to the Trika what are thought-objects within Western qualia in contrast to what makes for Abhinavagupta's grammatical persons. Further, twentieth-century history is a testament to the dystopias of Marxist regimes that makes Simone Weil prescient in her incomplete essay mentioned here.

Harman's humility in acknowledging the debt of ooo to past philosophers is undercut by his neglect of Eastern philosophies as valid disciplines. Harman wants all sorts of validation other than Asian or Indian validation of ooo. Such is his faith in American and European philosophers.

At the beginning of the book, Harman obsequiously mentions that Benedict Cumberbatch, the famous actor, listened to Harman in a private audience. As if, Cumberbatch's taking time off to indulge Harman is proof of the verity of ooo. Harman announces that ooo has all kinds of practical implications of which to him, the most important is its appropriation by architects and ooo's purported ability to annihilate deconstructionist modes of Francophone philosophising, beginning with Michel Foucault right down to Jacques Derrida. Harman appreciates only Bruno Latour since Latour has become a votary of ooo. This pride in the superiority of ooo is déjà vu for this reviewer. Martin Seligman, the propounder of positive psychology in freely available videos

online boasts that he receives enormous funding for his contributions to psychology. This funding and patronage by the wealthy, Seligman claims, has rendered classical psychoanalysis useless since Freud, according to Seligman, is too deterministic.

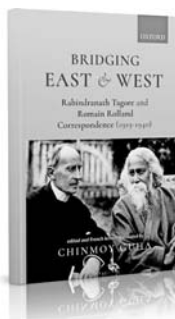
Positive psychology is preached by Seligman as 000 is touted here by Harman as the much awaited tectonic shift in both American and European philosophy. All because 000 has implications in the real world like nothing before 000 had. However, nowhere in this book does Harman explain what he means by the 'real' and how are we to access this 'real'? Within the economy of the Latour-Harman bind which Harman thinks exists, Harman takes it for granted that some non-sentient *dasein*—an impossibility—exists apart from consciousness. Thus, in one stroke Harman purports to destroy centuries of phenomenological discourse beginning with Plato, through Hegel, Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, and to Hans Georg-Gadamer. Then how is 000's methodology correct in assessing Lawrence's non-existent ontic comprehension of Trika praxes and right in proving Simone Weil's assessment of Marxists of Marx's generation as 'dupes'? (See Simone Weil, *Oppression and Liberty* (London: Routledge, 2004), 179).

000, which is so dismissive of previous modes of philosophising like positive psychology is dismissive of most psychological theories before Seligman had his eureka moment(s), has nothing to do with those questions which were raised in the beginning to prove the vacuity of 000 and thus, the book under review.

A simple engagement with Trika practitioners will expose Lawrence's superficial armchair Trika. A little historical sleuthing proves Weil correct. 000 is redundant in these analyses since Harman, and the Latour Harman presents to us, are both insufficient in their exposition of ontology and the being or whatness of objects and of perception.

000 would not be a failure as a philosophy were Harman to pay heed to Gadamer's warning in the second edition of Gadamer's *Truth and Method*. Thought objects are never to be put to applied uses in the real world. Then objects, orientations, and ontologies lose meaning.

Subbasis Chattopadhyay



***Bridging East and West:
Rabindranath Tagore and
Romain Rolland Correspondence
(1919–1940)***

Translated and Edited by
Chinmoy Guha

Oxford University Press, 2/11, Ground Floor, Ansari Road, Daryaganj, Delhi 110002. Website: <https://global.oup.com>. 2019. 288 pp. ₹995. HB. ISBN 9780199489046.

In the last issue of this journal, this reviewer had pointed out the prescience of Walter Benjamin in connecting the rise of fascism with the rise of what now goes by the name of popular culture, which in one of its variants is 'nobrow' as Peter Swirski points out in his *From Lowbrow to Nobrow* (2005). It is at this crucial juncture when we see a global resurgence in mass histrionics around the 'nobrow', which is a marker for the rise of extremism, that we have Chinmoy Guha intervening through the book under review. Guha's cultural intervention has been through translation, editing, and compiling with illuminating endnotes, the correspondence between Rabindranath Tagore and Romain Rolland.

In the aforementioned context of Walter Benjamin, aesthetics, and the nobrow which stoke the fires of fascism, we need to quote Tagore's letter to Charles Andrews reproduced in its entirety in this book (45–50). Guha's meticulous scholarship adds that this letter was written by Tagore from Hôtel Bristol, Vienna on 20 July, 1926: 'In Rome I [Tagore] came to know a professor of a genuinely spiritual character, a seeker of peace, who was strongly convinced not only of the necessity but of the philosophy of Fascism' (47) and then, while Tagore goes on to relate to Andrews his two encounters with Mussolini, in this same letter Tagore is ironically weary of his own impressions of Mussolini since, 'There have been times when history has played tricks with man and ... magnified ... small persons into a parody of greatness' which 'produces a mirage that falsifies the real and startles our imagination into a [misplaced] feeling of awe and exaggerated expectation' (50). The letter is relevant to our zeitgeist since the alt-right and powerful economists like Nial Fergusson are

calling out non-First World nations and people to be again dominated by forces that no longer care for the call of the falconer.

Guha's intervention is a theological intervention in the lines of both Father Raimundo Panikkar and Father Michael Amaladoss SJ. The late Panikkar was a pacifist who saw in the dialogue between the East and the West, the only road ahead to eradicating systematic injustices. Amaladoss continues to advocate dialogue in every possible forum. Guha's corpus in French, Bengali, and English is a testimony to his inner anthropomorphic call to be a bridge-builder himself. Through this book, he carries on the process of theological inculturation so much desired by Rolland, Tagore, Ramananda Chatterjee, and Kalidas Nag. To consider this book as mere correspondence between two great men is to misread it. Guha's writings, including his doctoral work on T S Eliot, shows that he has, over a long period of time, infused the numinous within literary studies. This numinosity is lacking in Indian letters today.

The fallacies of Rudyard Kipling's notion of continental differences and of Samuel Huntington's divisive rhetoric are erased by the letter that Rolland wrote to Tagore on 8 July 1926 (39–40) where Rolland writes of missing Tagore's presence though he followed Tagore 'in silence', for according to Rolland, Tagore's 'was a soul immersed in God' (40). Nonetheless, Tagore saw through the superficial spirituality of the professor Tagore met in Italy mentioned above. Tagore's letter to Andrews quoted above proves that Tagore knew of his own clay-feet and reasserts Tagore's humility. Mystics are humble but not always infallible. Thomas Carlyle's warning against hero-worship had an enduring influence on Tagore.

A mystic can never be a fascist. However, a fascist can masquerade as a mystic. Guha's endnote to this letter from Rolland to Tagore (endnote 128, 81–92) is a tour de force in contemporary literary sleuthing, which is sadly no longer practised in Indian universities and centres of higher learning. In this endnote, Guha unearths what Rolland wrote about the Mussolini episode to J R Bloch on 8 July 1926 (86). Guha does not shy away from representing honestly the problematics posed by Tagore's apparent fascination with Mussolini. Guha in

this same endnote, faithfully presents the 'strongly worded letter' by Guglielmo Salvadori to Tagore dated 16 July 1926 (89–90) where Salvadori, possibly mistakenly, felt that Tagore 'greatly damage[d] ... [their anti-fascist] Cause' (89). Guha then proceeds to show how Tagore was misunderstood by his friends (91) even after Tagore spoke of his need for 'purification' after meeting Mussolini (90).

Guha's unearthing of Tagore's correspondence with Ramananda Chatterjee and Rani Mahalano-bis's letter to Amal Home (91) opens up new vistas for future research within the dual domains of Bengal Renaissance studies and also, within Tagore studies. It is not an understatement that each of Guha's endnotes is thought-provoking and they repeatedly assert the singularity of literature and the arts over other socio-cultural qualia. For instance, in endnote 149 (95), Guha briefly comments on Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis*. Only Guha can point out the relative anonymity of this piece by Beethoven and the need for annotating *Missa Solemnis*. Classical music is manifest-mysticism. Reading Tagore and Rolland as represented here, one understands what Rudolf Otto meant by the sense of the holy. Rolland's 'oceanic feeling' is palpable in this correspondence.

Guha is in the line of Thomas Johnson, who scrupulously edited and compiled the letters of Emily Dickinson, and of Edward Mendelson, who is still editing the works of W H Auden for the Princeton University. Mendelson's prose editions have been reviewed by this author in earlier issues of this journal. Guha's job is more onerous than either Johnson's or Mendelson's works for three reasons. Guha, unlike Johnson and Mendelson, had to negotiate three languages to prepare this book; he does not have the funding or the facilities that First World white academics routinely receive.

Moreover, Indian universities are notoriously miserly in providing paid sabbaticals to scholars for writing books which are paradigm-shifting. Guha overcame all these three hurdles to give us a book, which is a manifesto for holding the head high when in a Nietzschean transvaluation of values, many Mussolinis, hyena-like, are now seeking to annihilate both Western and Eastern civilisations.

(Continued on page 630)

MANANA

**Exploring thought-currents from around the world.
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Doing and Allowing Harm

Fiona Woollard

Oxford University Press, Great Clarendon Street, Oxford, OX2 6DP. 2015. vi + 239 pp. £49.99. HB. ISBN 9780199683642.

The Doing/Allowing Distinction

SOMETIMES some fact about an agent's behaviour is relevant to something bad happening to another person: Fred's leg is broken and if I had behaved differently, it would not have been broken. Common moral and legal practice does not accord the same significance to all cases in which an agent's behaviour is relevant to a harm suffered by another. Obviously, it matters how bad the harm suffered is. Other morally relevant factors include whether the agent owes the victim any special consideration based on promises or special relationships. However, commonsense morality still seems to give different judgements in cases in which all such factors are equal.

Commonsense morality appears to attribute moral significance to the way the agent's behaviour is relevant to the harm. We separate different ways an agent can be relevant to a harm into different categories. In some cases, we say that 'the agent did harm' or 'the agent made the harm happen'. In other cases, we say 'the agent only allowed the harm' or 'the agent only let the harm happen'. These classifications seem to make a difference to our moral judgements. Often, we will judge a 'doing' of harm to be impermissible while an equivalent 'allowing' of harm is judged permissible.

Consider the following two cases, in each of which Bob has been bitten by a poisonous

snake and will die without immediate hospital treatment:

Push: A boulder is in the middle of the road, blocking Bobs route to the hospital. The boulder can only be moved out of the way by pushing it down the adjacent slope. Victor is trapped on the slope, directly in the boulder's path. Freeing Victor or detouring around the boulder will delay Bob so he will not reach the hospital in time. Bob pushes the boulder. The boulder rolls down the slope, hitting Victor and crushing him to death.

Non-Interpose: The boulder is already rolling towards Victor. Bob could drive his car into the boulder's path, bringing it to a halt. Doing so would delay him so he would not reach the hospital in time. He does not drive into the boulder's path and the boulder hits Victor.

In Push, we would say that Bob did harm to Victor or killed him. In Non-Interpose, we would say that Bob merely allowed Victor to die. Our intuitions about the permissibility of Bobs behaviour also differ. It seems permissible for Bob to refuse to move his car into the boulder's path if this would prevent him from reaching the hospital in time to save his own life. Although it might be heroic for Bob to stop and help Victor, he is certainly not required to do so. In contrast, pushing the boulder towards Victor seems impermissible. We might understand Bob's behaviour if he pushed the boulder out of the way, but it would




nonetheless be wrong. We see a moral distinction between pushing the boulder and failing to interpose the car even though everything else seems to be equal: in both cases, Bob must choose between his death (by snakebite) and Victor's death (by boulder); we can presume that there is just as much probability that some happy chance will intervene and prevent the deaths in each case; in both cases, as far as we know, Bob and Victor are strangers to one another. The important distinction between the cases seems to be that in Push Bob does harm while in Non-Interpose he merely allows harm. This book explores the nature and moral significance of this distinction.

The distinction between doing and allowing harm seems to play a central role in common moral practice. A moral theory that did not assign moral significance to some such distinction would give verdicts that were radically different from commonsense morality. It would either permit too much—permitting agents to do harms that we would usually see as unjustifiable—or demand too much—requiring agents to prevent harms that we would usually think they were permitted to allow. Except in special circumstances it is usually intuitively permissible for an agent to allow harm to come to another when avoiding doing so would involve some serious cost—thus it is intuitively permissible for Bob to refuse to save Victor in Non-Interpose. We even think that it is permissible to allow another's death if preventing it would require sacrificing not the agent's life, but something very important to the agent, such as a career or a relationship with a loved one. We cite personal projects and even trivial hobbies to explain why we may allow people to die of poverty when we could prevent these deaths by donations to charities. Yet, we do not think it permissible to do serious harm to protect these projects. I cannot harm others to avoid damage to my projects, my career, or my relationships. If we deny that the

distinction between doing and allowing is morally relevant, we must judge both types of case alike: either we must sacrifice much more to avoid allowing harm or we may justify doing harm much more easily than intuition suggests.

However, it is not clear that this distinction can bear the required moral weight. When serious harm is in question, when the harm is foreseeable and avoidable, why should it matter whether it is done or merely allowed? Many philosophers deny that this distinction carries any moral relevance. The moral relevance of the doing/allowing distinction should not be accepted without argument. If this distinction is morally relevant, its relevance cannot be a basic fact about morality, a fact that we are justified in accepting without argument. True, there must be some basic facts about morality: that pain suffered by an undeserving person has a *prima facie* negative value may be an example. It is exceedingly difficult to provide a criterion that picks out the facts that can be basic. Nonetheless we are able to identify some facts as unsuitable to be basic facts. That doing is harder to justify than allowing seems to me to be unsuitable to be a basic fact. The moral relevance of this distinction cries out for some defence, some connection with more basic moral concepts.

If such a defence cannot be provided then we face two unpalatable alternatives. Our first option is to accept the counterintuitive implications of the denial of the moral relevance of the distinction. Our second option is to retain the distinction as what Shelly Kagan calls a 'dangling distinction': a distinction that explains our intuitions but remains unsupported by the rest of our moral theory. Neither of these options is attractive. Even those who do not see the relevance of the doing/allowing distinction as unsuitable to be a basic moral fact should accept the methodological principle that, other things being equal, we should try and have as few unsupported beliefs as possible. 

REPORTS

New Mission Centre

Sri Ramakrishna Educational Society, Villupuram, was taken over by the Ramakrishna Mission, and a new branch of the Mission started functioning there. It was formally inaugurated on 2 June, the sacred Phalaharini Kali Puja day. Srimat Swami Gautamanandaji Maharaj, Vice-President, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission and Adhyaksha, Ramakrishna Math, Chennai, presided over the inaugural programme which was attended by about 2,000 people comprising monks, devotees, staff, and students. The address of the centre is 'Ramakrishna Mission, No. 11, Ranganathan Road, Poonthottam, Villupuram 605602', phone: (4146) 290037 and 94879 39792, email: <villupuram@rkmm.org> and website: <rkmvillupuram.org>.

Commemoration of the 125th Anniversary of Swami Vivekananda's Addresses at the World's Parliament of Religions in Chicago, USA

The following centres held programmes mentioned against their names: **In India: Almora:** Cultural competitions in the months of May and June in which a total of 2,794 students from 30 educational institutions took part. Further, a programme comprising talks, recitations, and music was held on 9 June; it was attended by about 500 students and 100 parents and teachers. **Asansol:** A youths' convention and a lecture programme on 22 June, which were attended by nearly 600 people. **Hyderabad:** Talks, recitations, and cultural competitions in 82 schools in Telangana from 26 October 2018 to 20 June 2019 in which a total of 20,797 students took part. **Kankhal:** Quiz and elocution competitions on 11 May in which 88 students from 22

schools participated. The winners were given prizes in a programme held on 1 June. **Mangaluru:** Lecture programmes in 6 colleges in the month of June, which were attended by 2,450 youths in all. **Mumbai:** A public meeting at the Gateway of India, Mumbai, on 31 May, which was attended by 250 people. **Rajkot:** A lecture programme on 11 June, which was attended by 150 persons. **Shimla:** A youths' convention and a devotees' convention on 15 and 16 June in which respectively 59 college students and 52 devotees took part. **Vadodara:** A lecture programme on 9 June, which was attended by 325 persons. **Outside India: Phoenix, South Africa:** At Phoenix centre: (i) A seminar on 1 June in which 130 people took part. (ii) A special function on 24 June attended by 500 devotees. (iii) A meeting for senior citizens attended by 600 senior citizens. At Johannesburg sub-centre: A seminar on 19 June in which 100 delegates took part.

News of Branch Centres

Vadodara centre held a summer camp for children from 12 to 19 May in which 125 children took part. The programme included chanting, bhajans, yogasanas, values education programmes, and so on.

Kankhal Sevashrama observed its 119th Foundation Day on 1 June. The Governor of Uttarakhand Smt Baby Rani Maurya and Srimat Swami Shivamayanandaji Maharaj, Vice-President, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, addressed the public meeting held in this connection and also inaugurated the following units at the Sevashrama's hospital: an operation theatre complex, ICU, surgical ward, emergency department, and CT scan facility. About 1,000 people attended the function.

Swami Suvirananda, General Secretary, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, inaugurated the newly constructed multipurpose building at the **Ayodhya** sub-centre of **Lucknow Sevashrama** on 2 June, the sacred Phalaharini Kali Puja day.

The first floor of Vijnanananda Sadhu Nivas at **Kanpur Ashrama** was inaugurated by Swami Suvirananda on 3 June.

Sri Tathagata Roy, Governor of Meghalaya, visited Vivekananda Cultural Centre of **Shillong Ashrama** on 8 June.

As part of its centenary celebrations, **Salem Ashrama** conducted (i) a conference for medical students on 13 June, which was attended by 500 medicos from seven colleges and (ii) a special programme for sanitation workers of Salem Municipal Corporation on 22 June in which 100 workers took part.

Srimat Swami Suhitanandaji Maharaj, Vice-President, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, dedicated the monks' dining hall at **Narottam Nagar** centre on 17 June, the sacred Snan Yatra day.

In the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) 2019, an entrance test for medical and dental courses, a resident of the students' home of **Chandigarh Ashrama** secured the 37th rank at the national level. He also stood second in the state of Punjab.

Eight students of **Deoghar Vidyapith** secured above 95 percentile in the NEET 2019.

Aalo centre held 20 ENT camps from 28 May to 20 June in which 903 patients were examined. The centre also conducted a health awareness programme in a nearby village on 12 June, which was attended by 70 people.

On the World Environment Day on 5 June, **Aalo** centre arranged talks and screening of documentaries for school students, explaining to them the environmental hazards and the

means to prevent them. Nearly 350 students attended the programme.

Srimat Swami Prabhanandaji Maharaj, Vice-President, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, laid the foundation stone for the proposed monks' quarters, Chandramani Bhavan, at the Viveknagar campus of **Agartala** centre on 18 May, the sacred Buddha Purnima.

Guwahati Ashrama conducted a free medical camp during Ambubachi Mela near Kamakhya Temple from 22 to 25 June in which 7,622 patients were treated.

Jammu centre observed the World Environment Day on 5 June by holding a public meeting in which about 200 people participated. In the run-up to the event, the centre had conducted a drawing competition on the theme 'Green Earth, Beautiful Earth' on 2 June in which 120 youths took part.

Swami Suvirananda inaugurated the digital cathlab at **Lucknow** hospital on 1 June.

On the occasion of the World Environment Day on 5 June, **Narottam Nagar** centre planted 340 saplings on the centre's campus.

Srimat Swami Gautamanandaji Maharaj laid the foundation stone for the proposed community hall and monks' quarters on the Nagachi campus of **Ramanathapuram** centre on 6 June.

The following centres observed the International Yoga Day on 21 June with yogasana demonstrations and talks: **Chandigarh, Jammu, Kochi, Madurai, Pala, Ponnampet, and Rajkot**, including its **Ahmedabad** sub-centre.

Germany centre is in the process of consolidating its three establishments, in Berlin, Mühlheim, and Bindweide, into a single establishment. As part of this exercise, the activities of its sub-centre at Mühlheim, near Frankfurt, were brought to a close on 25 May. All correspondence with the centre should henceforth be directed to its facility in Berlin.

Values Education and Youth Programmes

Delhi centre conducted 49 values education workshops in 16 states and 2 union territories between 27 May and 14 June; the workshops were attended by a total of 2,767 teachers. Pune Math held a personality development programme on 22 June attended by 227 police personnel.

Rajkot centre conducted a leadership training programme on 27 May in which 270 youths took part. The centre also held a programme on 29 May to raise the morale of the students who had failed in board examinations. The programme was attended by 50 students and their parents.

Salem centre held motivational talks at two schools in Salem on 14 and 15 June.

Shillong Ashrama conducted a seminar on the topic 'Use and Abuse of Modern Gadgets' on 10 June in which 55 teachers from 12 schools took part.

Silchar centre held a values education programme on 1 and 2 June in which 374 students and 78 teachers participated.

Taki Ashrama conducted values education programmes at two schools in North 24 Parganas district on 21 June in which a total of 325 students took part.

Swachchha Bharat Abhiyan (Clean India Campaign)

Kamarpukur centre held cleanliness drives at Kamarpukur village on 26 May and 23 June.

Mangaluru Ashrama conducted the following activities: **in May:** (i) four cleanliness drives in Mangaluru involving 1,950 volunteers, (ii) awareness campaigns for 24 days in which volunteers reached out to 1,450 households in different parts of Mangaluru city, spreading awareness about waste management, and (iii) cleanliness drives in 100 villages of Dakshina Kannada and Udupi districts; **in June:** (i) five cleanliness drives in

Mangaluru involving 2,150 volunteers, (ii) awareness campaigns for 25 days in which volunteers reached out to 1,600 households in different parts of Mangaluru city, spreading awareness about waste management, (iii) cleanliness drives in 106 villages of Dakshina Kannada and Udupi districts, (iv) talks on cleanliness in 130 schools of Dakshina Kannada district, which were attended by about 13,000 students, and (v) magic shows on the cleanliness theme in 19 schools in Udupi district.

Relief

Flood Rehabilitation : Kerala: In the aftermath of the floods that had hit Kerala in the month of August 2018, **Tiruvalla** centre helped victims to rebuild their 3 new houses as well as repair and renovate 11 houses in Pathanamthitta and Alappuzha districts from 15 October to 8 March; **Tiruvalla** centre set up a water treatment plant, cleaned a well, and distributed 10 computers, 3 printers, and a camera from 7 September to 24 January, benefitting over 360 families in Pathanamthitta and Alappuzha districts.

Drought Relief : Maharashtra: In the aftermath of the recent drought, **Aurangabad** centre distributed 150 drums, for storing water, among 150 affected families on 13 and 24 May.

Summer Relief : Tamil Nadu: **Madurai** centre distributed 600 litres of buttermilk to thirsty wayfarers in Madurai on 19 and 22 April.

Cyclone Relief: (i) **Odisha:** In the aftermath of severe damage to the homes and public infrastructure caused by the Cyclone Fani that made landfall in Puri on 3 May, the following centres conducted relief operations as detailed below: (a) **Bhubaneswar** centre distributed 1,486 solar lanterns, 1,486 dhotis, 1,486 lungis, 2,972 saris, and 1,486 tarpaulins among 1,486 families in Khordha and Puri districts from 22 to 31 May. (b) **Puri Math** distributed 3,000 solar lanterns, 3,000 plastic sheets, 3,000 saris, and 3,000 lungis

among 5,117 families in Puri district from 5 to 30 June. (c) **Puri Mission Ashrama** distributed 4,000 saris, 4,000 lungis, 4,000 towels, and 4,000 mosquito-nets among 4,000 families in Puri district from 5 to 28 June. (ii) **Gujarat**: On 14 June, **Porbandar** centre distributed 1,200 packets of snacks to people who had taken shelter in government-run camps in Porbandar as a precautionary measure against the Cyclone Vayu.


Drought Relief: (i) **Karnataka**: In response to the drought in various parts of Belagavi district, **Belagavi** centre distributed 40.92 lakh litres of water among 5,543 affected families from 4 May to 18 June. (ii) **Maharashtra**: In the aftermath of the recent drought, **Aurangabad** centre distributed 21.25 lakh litres of water in 13 villages of Aurangabad district from 19 May to 4 June.

Summer Relief: (i) **Chhattisgarh**: **Raipur** centre distributed 5,400 litres of buttermilk to thirsty wayfarers in Raipur from 25 May to 21 June. (ii) **Gujarat**: **Vadodara** centre distributed 7,200 litres of buttermilk and 31,000 litres of drinking water to thirsty wayfarers in Vadodara from 1 May to 17 June. (iii) **Tamil Nadu**: (a) **Chennai Mission Ashrama** distributed about 30,000 litres of buttermilk to thirsty wayfarers in Chennai district from 1 to 31 May. (b) **Salem** centre distributed 9,600 litres of buttermilk to thirsty wayfarers in Salem from 14 April to 31 May. (iv) **Telangana**: **Hyderabad** centre distributed 37,024 litres of buttermilk to thirsty wayfarers passing by the centre and in Karimnagar district from 1 May to 10 June. (v) **West Bengal**: **Bagda** centre served cold water, molasses, and gram to 3,879 thirsty wayfarers from 15 April to 16 June.

Fire Relief: **Arunachal Pradesh**: In response to a fire incident in **Aalo** in which 3 houses were completely destroyed, **Aalo** centre distributed 19 blankets, 28 shirts, 19 trousers, 19 jackets, 24 sweaters, 20 belts, and 3 sets of utensils—each set containing a karahi, a pot, a kettle, a bucket, 4 plates,

4 bowls, a ladle, a jug, a mug, a tumbler, and a tea pan—among 3 affected families on 6 June.

Distress Relief: The following centres distributed various items, shown against their names, to needy people: (a) **Aalo**: 769 shirts, 414 trousers, 379 jackets, and 414 sweaters on 5 and 23 June. (b) **Asansol**: 400 notebooks on 22 June. (c) **Chandipur**: 95 saris on 15 April. (d) **Coimbatore Mission Vidyalaya**: 1,300 shirts and 1,300 trousers from 8 to 21 May. (e) **Cuttack**: 100 shirts, 100 trousers, and 100 tops from 19 to 26 May. (f) **Kamarpukur**: 900 shirts, 900 trousers, and 600 tops from 30 November to 5 March. (g) **Koyilandy**: 150 school bags, 150 umbrellas, 5,280 notebooks, 560 pens, and 280 pencils from 15 to 27 June. (h) **Madurai**: 3,375 notebooks on 21 June. (i) **Narottam Nagar**: 50 bicycles on 18 June. (j) **Ramharipur**: 5,000 shirts from 12 April to 30 May. (k) **Shyamsayer, Bardhaman** (sub-centre of the Headquarters): 1,000 shirts and 500 trousers on 27 January and 8 March.

Economic Rehabilitation: Under self-employment programme, **Chandipur** centre gave a sewing machine to a poor and needy person on 15 April. 

(Continued from page 624)

As Guha points out in his 'Introduction' (xxi-lxxi): 'This dialogue between Rolland and Tagore was much more than an interface between a mythical East and a mythical West ... [it was a disruption of] the Orientalist discourse ... leading to a serious falsification of human history [had not Tagore and Rolland met and carried on their correspondence]' (li).

This book, whose photos have been curated by Pinaki De (xv), as acknowledged by Guha, makes for an indispensable sourcebook about both Tagore and Rolland. Guha has provided both Rolland and Tagore in the English speaking world, a shared room of their own.

Subhasis Chattopadhyay

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Mayavati Renovation Work Report



It was a long-standing desire of Swami Vivekananda to have an ashrama in the Himalayas. In his reply to the welcome address given to him in Almora, he expressed:

‘Friends, you have been very kind to allude to an idea of mine, which is to start a centre in the Himalayas, and perhaps I have sufficiently explained why it should be so, why, above all others, this is the spot which I want to select as one of the great centres to teach this universal religion. These mountains are associated with the best memories of our race; if these Himalayas are taken away from the history of religious India, there will be very little left behind. Here, therefore, must be one of those centres, not merely of activity, but more of calmness, of meditation, and of peace; and I hope some day to realise it.’

This idea of Swamiji was finally materialised in March 1899, when Mrs Charlotte and Mr Henry Sevier, a British couple disciple of him, acquired a property in the locality of Mayavati, present district of Champawat, Uttarakhand, with the sole purpose of establishing an ashrama. After a long search in different localities around Almora, this British couple together with Swami Swarupananda, who was then the editor of the monthly journal in English *Prabuddha Bharata*, found a secluded and peaceful place that fulfilled almost all of Swami Vivekananda’s vision for a centre in the Himalayas.

The property was a tea estate and consisted of about 25 acres of forestland at an altitude of 6,400 feet, 50 miles east of Almora, and it commanded a magnificent view of the Himalayan snow peaks. There was at least one usable building and several huts. They decided to use the main tea processing and store building as the ashrama quarters. The challenge to convert a storehouse into a living ashrama was tremendous. Moreover, this building had to house the press and binding department of *Prabuddha Bharata*, a monthly journal of the Order, which was shifted from Almora to Mayavati. Mr Henry Sevier was the manager of the ashrama, but due to his austere life, hard work and some previous ailments, he left his body in October 1900. Swami Vivekananda somehow felt this loss while travelling in Egypt and immediately decided to come back to India. After reaching Kolkata, he came to know of Mr Sevier’s passing and made plans to come to Mayavati.

Together with Swamis Shivananda and Sadananda, Swamiji reached Mayavati on 3 January 1901. He stayed till 18 January, giving instructions, inspiration and immense joy to the struggling residents of the ashrama, including Swami(s) Swarupananda, Virajananda, Sachidananda, Vimalananda, Brahmachari Amritananda, and Mrs Sevier. The contribution



Swami Swarupananda

of Mrs Sevier to develop and sustain Swamiji's ideal for a centre in the Himalayas and her all-round financial support is unparalleled. During her eighteen-year stay at the ashrama she became endeared to one and all as the "Mother of Mayavati".

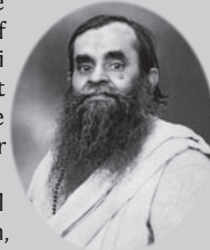
After Swamiji's visit to Mayavati, a new chapter in the spiritual history of the world started to unfold. The following extract from the "Prospectus of Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati", written by Swami Vivekananda himself, summarizes the spirit through which hundreds of monks and sincere aspirants have been living and working together in Mayavati till present:

"Wherever there has been expansion in love or progress in well being of individuals or numbers, it has been through the perception, realization, and practicalisation of the Eternal Truth—The Oneness of All Beings. ... To give this ONE TRUTH a freer and fuller scope in elevating the lives of individuals and leavening the mass of mankind, we start this Advaita Ashrama on the Himalayan heights, the land of its first expiration.

Here it is hoped to keep Advaita free from all superstitions and weakening contaminations. Here will be taught and practiced nothing but the Doctrine of Unity, pure and simple; and though in entire sympathy with all other systems [of philosophy], this Ashrama is dedicated to Advaita and Advaita alone."

On 23 March 2018 Srmat Swami Smarananandaji Maharaj, president of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, inaugurated in the presence of several monks and devotees the "Restoration Mayavati. The project has the restoring the four old buildings where Swami Vivekananda building and Captain Sevier and main building was the first to be approach has been adopted. on the site with structural wood specialists from Forest it was decided to restore the possible, local materials in use some 140 years ago. An architect has been hired, while skilled India and local experts in the traditional technologies are bringing back an outlook similar to the one Swami Vivekananda saw when he visited the ashrama.

Faithful to Swamiji's ideas for this ashrama, this main building will house a meditation hall and a large exhibition hall in the ground floor, while in the first floor there will be a small meditation room, a Mother Sevier room, a Mayavati Diaries room and, to keep the building alive, two rooms for senior sadhus.



Swami Virajananda



Swami Smaranananda

purpose of conserving and of the ashrama: the main one stayed, the Prabuddha Bharata Mother Sevier Cottages. The taken up, for which a traditional After several consultations engineers from IIT Roorkee and Research Institute, Dehradun, building only with, as far as at the time of its construction, specialized in conservation workers from different parts of

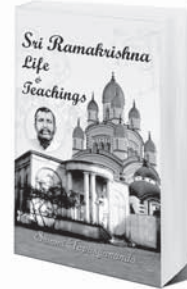
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Pages 240 | Price ₹ 70



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Towards Teaching Excellence

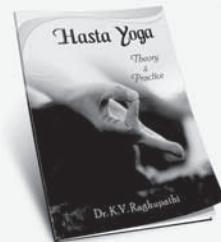
Swami Nityasthananda

More than a mere profession, teaching is a mission—a mission to work towards the betterment of the society's welfare and prosperity. Based on the ideas of Swami Vivekananda, Swami Nityasthananda, the author of this book and an established scholar and thinker of the Ramakrishna Order, has compendiously addressed the challenges in the realm of teaching and learning. This book would motivate the teachers in achieving teaching excellence and thereby help them in educating and empowering the future generations to work towards social excellence.

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Dr. K. V. Raghupathi

The author, Dr. K. V. Raghupathi, through this booklet attempts to create awareness of mudras, or 'yoga through hands' as he calls it. While it may be difficult for the aged or the sick to practise asanas and even pranayama, anyone anywhere can practise these simple yet powerful mudras to rejuvenate the energy levels and recover from many of the illness afflicting the body and the mind.



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We want to lead mankind to the place where there is neither the Vedas, nor the Bible, nor the Koran; yet this has to be done by harmonising the Vedas, the Bible and the Koran.

Mankind ought to be taught that religions are but the varied expressions of THE RELIGION, which is Oneness, so that each may choose the path that suits him best.



Swami Vivekananda

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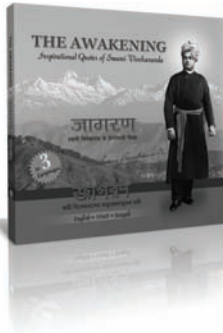


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The original quotes of Swami Vivekananda are mainly in English and have been collected from The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda (9 vols. set), while the Hindi translations are quoted from Vivekananda Sahitya (10 vols. set), both published by Advaita Ashrama. The Bengali translations are from Swami Vivekananda Bani O Rachana (10 vols. set) published by Udbodhan Office, Ramakrishna Math, Baghbazar, Kolkata. Enthusiastic readers may refer to these titles for further study and understanding of Swami Vivekananda's teachings.



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PILGRIM'S GUIDE TO THE HOLY TRIO IN KOLKATA



Sri Ramakrishna Visits Mahesh Ratha-Yatra

After attending Rathayatra at Balaram's house on July 14, 1885, Thakur was eager to join the festival at Mahesh for Ultho Ratha, held eight days later. Though the pain from the sore in his throat, had intensified and he could hardly stand, this could not stop him. On the day of the Ulto Ratha he came to Mahesh by boat from Dakshineswar with a group of devotees. A three-storied house near the Jagannath temple was reserved for his rest. Within a short time Golap-Ma cooked khichuri, but Thakur could not enjoy the food because of the severe pain in his throat. The iron and steel chariot, weighing 125 tonnes, had been decorated with flowers and leaves for its return journey to the Jagannath temple. Throngs of singing devotees were present. At last the music reached the ears of Thakur, who was then taking rest. Unable to stay in bed, he rushed down to the first floor verandah and saw the ratha from there. The next moment he ran out of the house. The devotees also ran after him, but before they

could catch him he was in the midst of the crowd, immersed in mahabhava. The devotees were alarmed because the Master was standing directly in front of the moving wheels of the chariot. He was in imminent danger, but they were helpless as they could not get through the crowd. Moments passed, and their hearts beat furiously. What would happen? Then suddenly about fifty hefty men left the rope of the chariot and surrounded the Master, forming a protective ring about him. When the chariot stopped moving, people started enquiring about the reason. Word soon spread about the Master, and people came rushing over to see him, pushing and jostling each other. People on all sides jostled to have his darshan. All the while



Jagannath image in Mahesh

Thakur stood there quietly, completely absorbed within himself. The attention of the crowd completely changed now. Everyone became mad to have a glimpse of Ramakrishna, feeling that Jagannath and Ramakrishna were one. At last the Master was rescued and brought to the temple. On his way to the temple, the Master, still deeply absorbed in divine ecstasy, frequently halted and stood like an inert image, radiating beauty.



Side entrance to Jagannath Temple in Mahesh



Iron chariot at Mahesh

In loving memory of Dr. Rina Bhar —Dr. Gopal Chandra Bhar

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*The best guide in life is strength. In religion,
as in all other matters, discard everything
that weakens you, have nothing to do
with it.*

—Swami Vivekananda



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